

GESCHICHTE AND HEILSGESCHICHTE IN OLD TESTAMENT
INTERPRETATION WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO THE WORK OF GERHARD VON RAD

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ABSTRACT

In concentrating on Geschichte and Heilsgeschichte in Old Testament interpretation with particular reference to the work of Gerhard von Rad, the dissertation begins by tracing in Chapter One the development of Old Testament theology from its emergence out of the interaction between rationalism, especially as it influenced historical criticism and German idealism, and Protestant Orthodoxy to its present situation. We first investigate the development of Heilsgeschichte, concluding that it takes its form from an attempt to preserve the spiritual content of theology, an attempt to escape into a sphere where historical criticism had no authority, and from the manner in which its proponents adopted the presuppositions of German idealism for its presentation. Thus it seems to have arisen to meet the apologetic needs of the nineteenth century. The chapter continues with a description of the manner in which historico-critical principles gradually gained ascendancy over Heilsgeschichte, giving rise to the discipline of the history of Israel's religion, until there was a revival of the theological discipline as a systematic presentation of Israel's religious ideas in the early twentieth century. The theology of Gerhard von Rad represents a revolt against the religio-historical and systematic methods of theological presentation, and a line of development is traced through von Rad's works which explains his concern for the resurgence of the Heilsgeschichte.

An exposition of von Rad's understanding of history is given in the second chapter, and the conclusion is reached that his idea of history is similar to the Deuteronomistic theology of history, which was the first to clearly formulate the phenomenon of Heilsgeschichte, i.e., of a course of history shaped and led to a fulfillment by the continual injection of a

word of judgment and salvation into it. In his presentation of the Old Testament Heilsgeschichte, however, we point out that von Rad is almost exclusively concerned with the historicity of the Heilsgeschichte. Chapter Three is a lengthy treatment of the major critics of von Rad's methodology and his idea of history. It concludes with his reply to them.

Chapter Four is a discussion of the contemporary approaches and methodologies and includes specific criticisms of von Rad's approach. It attempts to show that he does not actually accomplish his purpose of separating the Heilsgeschichte from the history of Israel's religion, but that in attempting to do so he has caused considerable difficulty for theological understanding. We conclude the discussion on methodology with some suggestions for developing an Old Testament theology, attempting to avoid the pitfalls of theologies based on historical and systematic methodologies that have rationalistic presuppositions behind them, yet realizing the importance of the historical perspective and the necessity of some kind of systematic treatment of the Old Testament materials.

The fifth chapter presents a critique of the ideas of history in Old Testament theology and specifically investigates the formative factors behind the presuppositions that bring von Rad to sharply separate the two versions of the history. These factors are: (a) Karl Barth's fear of bringing revelatory events into history where they would become relative and passing; (b) Bultmann's loss of history for the kerygma theology, and von Rad's attempt to regain it while still acknowledging the idea of history that prevents such a union; (c) Ernst Troeltsch's principles of analogy, correlation and criticism; (d) von Rad's allegiance to the historically skeptical Alt and Noth school of historical criticism; (e) the philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey and his idea that poetry is the highest form of

understanding; and (f) the type of thought evident in the works of Rudolf Otto, where there is a corresponding elevation of the secondary interpretations to the decline of the original elements and a promotion of the charismatic over the religio-historical in theology.

On the basis of our analysis of von Rad's work, the following conclusions are reached: (a) Troeltsch's principle of analogy need not be binding on historical criticism forever; (b) we need not adopt a methodology which excludes supranatural and suprahuman occurrences from the status of history; (c) one has other choices for a scientific presentation of Israel's history than that offered by Alt and Noth who are notoriously skeptical; (d) where means of crosschecking a historical report's accuracy are lacking, Israel's picture of the history is to be preferred over one that threatens to separate fact and meaning; and (e) von Rad's emphasis on Israel's early history as poetry, this being the way faith perceives things, seems to stem from the defeat of nineteenth-century ideas by twentieth-century historical reality.

When we consider the consequences of von Rad's separation of the two versions of the history we conclude: (a) the kerygmatic version appears to be built in the air; (b) von Rad's theology is not an adequate solution to positivism, but in a certain sense represents a capitulation to it; (c) it constitutes a threat to biblical religion, because if event can be completely dissolved biblical religion cannot survive; (d) we lose the sense of importance for actual history, resulting in the possibility that myth or fable could function equally well; (e) secondary experiences and interpretation are given predominance over fact and event; (f) there is a threat of separating fact and meaning, and this raises the problems associated with neo-Kantianism and the existential interpretation; and (g) the Christ-event in

the New Testament presents special problems for von Rad's position, because Jesus Christ as a saving event subjecting himself to time and space in human history corresponds to the belief that God revealed himself in Israel's history in concrete events which are subject to historico-critical investigation.

The primary question raised by von Rad's work concerns the locus and content of revelation. It would seem that if an event is to be revelational, the revelatory nature of that event would have to be recognized when it occurred. This is made possible in the Old Testament by the prophetic word. Von Rad, in giving event priority over word, makes it appear as if the events in the Heilsgeschichte function as revelation without word. But the revelatory character of these events is given in the cult, not by the prophetic word in combination with the event in its originality. Thus it seems that recognition of the revelatory character of the event takes place only in the worshipping community, not in the event when it occurred.

As a final effort, the question of faith and history is discussed in Chapter Six. It begins with a critique of the historico-critical method. We conclude that the method cannot exclude the possibility of miracles or transcendent activity in history. Allowing for the possibility of transcendent causes is the only way of maintaining the integrity of the historico-critical method. A discussion of the relationship between Geschichte and Heilsgeschichte follows based on the idea that relating all parts of historical experience is a necessary metaphysical task. In view of von Rad's decision to allow the critical picture and the Heilsgeschichte to remain separate, we offer a description of the relation of history to Heilsgeschichte as understood by C. H. Dodd. After identifying what he means by history, we offer a sketch of his understanding of Heilsgeschichte.

We follow the development of his views of history as he explains how the word of God, whether by prophet, Jesus Christ or the Church, is an actual factor in shaping history in the direction of God's purpose when a response is made to this word. Dodd demonstrates how the biblical view of history is the meaning of all history. Thus in the final analysis, all history is Heilsgeschichte, with no situation incapable of being lifted into the order of the Heilsgeschichte.

FOREWORD

The scope of this dissertation is broad, treating both the general subject of methodology in Old Testament theology and the specific question of Geschichte and Heilsgeschichte in Old Testament interpretation with particular attention given to the work of Gerhard von Rad. Therefore, this dissertation is more subject oriented than thesis oriented. The nature of the subject matter has made it necessary to discuss methodology and the question of history on somewhat of an alternating basis. For example, the first chapter deals with the development of the Heilsgeschichte movement up to the middle of the nineteenth century and the development of Old Testament theology and method to the present time; we then discuss von Rad's idea of history. After the chapter dealing with the remarks of von Rad's critics and his reply to them, we point out, in the next chapter, the weaknesses and inconsistencies of systematic presentations of Old Testament theology and also the advantages and disadvantages of von Rad's traditio-historical (Heilsgeschichte) method. We conclude this chapter with some remarks on formulating Old Testament theology. The following chapter discusses the various views of history held by von Rad's critics and the Pannenberg school's attempt to provide a methodological solution to the problems caused by von Rad's isolation of the kerygmatic version from historical criticism. It ends with an analysis and critique of von Rad's sharp

separation of the two versions of the history. The final chapter is concerned with faith and history.

Credit for the way this dissertation has taken shape is due to a number of individuals. The Rev. Robert Davidson, now of Glasgow University, saw us through the bulk of the work, and Professor G. W. Anderson was instrumental in seeing it through to completion. Thanks is due to Professor Claus Westermann of Heidelberg University and his assistant, Eberhard Ruprecht, who gave helpful insights into the background in German thought that has affected the discipline of Old Testament theology, especially its German forms. Special thanks is due to the late Professor Gerhard von Rad who, in the spring of 1971, was gracious enough to discuss several important issues with us in the hospitality of his home. We also count it a privilege to have been able to sit in on the last class, "Ge-rechtigkeit im Alten Testaments," Professor von Rad taught before his death on October 31, 1971.

Because variations occur between British and American spelling, it should be noted by the reader that we have followed, with the exception of quotations taken from British publications, the spelling of Webster's New International Dictionary, third edition.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of history in von Rad's work begins with his observation that one of the most serious problems for biblical scholarship today is that we have two widely divergent pictures of Israel's history and, for the present, we must reconcile ourselves to both of them. One picture is reconstructed by modern critical scholarship; the other is created by the faith of Israel. Each is the product of entirely different intellectual activities. The activity behind the critical picture is rational and objective. With the help of the historico-critical method, behind which lies the presupposition of the principle of analogy, it presents us with a picture of Israel's history as it "really" was.¹ Von Rad feels that this critically reconstructed picture is impressively complete or closed. The activity behind the picture created by faith "is confessional and personally involved in the events to the point of fervour."² Von Rad states: "Historical investigation searches for a critically assured minimum--the kerygmatic picture tends toward a theological maximum."³ The faith of Israel, von Rad argues, was unrelated to the results of modern historical scholarship. We are not concerned with the philosophical presuppositions of this discipline or the method by which it operates. While the way in which Israel's faith presented history is not yet adequately clarified,

¹OTT, I, 107.

²OTT, I, 107.

³OTT, I, 108.

von Rad places considerable emphasis on the fact that poetry is characteristic of a confessional presentation, especially as it concerns early historical experiences. Poetry is the way Israel made sure of historical facts and the form by which she expressed special basic insights. Poetry is the way faith perceives things.

Because of these methodological presuppositions, Geschichte and Heilsgeschichte are locked in strife. Although we have extended our research into the history of the development of Heilsgeschichte and the general problem of methodology in Old Testament theology, the primary concerns of this study are: (a) to identify what von Rad means by Geschichte and Heilsgeschichte, (b) to discover the formative factors behind the presuppositions that bring von Rad to sharply separate the two versions of the history, (c) to investigate the adequacy of his reasons for keeping the two histories separate, and (d) to point out the consequences of maintaining the separation of these versions from one another.

ABBREVIATIONS

AThR	<u>Anglican Theological Review</u>
ASTI	<u>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</u>
BASOR	<u>Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research</u>
BibSac	<u>Bibliotheca Sacra</u>
BJRL	<u>The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</u>
BO	<u>Bibliotheca Orientalis</u>
CanJTh	<u>Canadian Journal of Theology</u>
CD	Barth, K. <u>Church Dogmatics</u> .
ChQR	<u>Church Quarterly Review</u>
CQR	<u>Catholic Quarterly Review</u>
Dial	<u>Dialogue</u>
ELC	<u>Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church</u>
EOTH	<u>Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics</u> . Edited by C. Westermann. Richmond, 1966.
ET	<u>Expository Times</u>
EvTh	<u>Evangelische Theologie</u>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCW	Rad, G. von. <u>Das Geschichtsbild des Chronistischen Werkes</u> . Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament, 55. Stuttgart, 1930.
HUCA	<u>Hebrew Union College Annual</u>
IB	The Interpreter's Bible

Int	<u>Interpretation</u>
JAAR	<u>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</u>
JBL	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
JBR	<u>Journal of Bible and Religion</u>
JThCh	<u>Journal for Theology and Church</u>
KuD	<u>Kerygma und Dogma</u>
LQ	<u>The Lutheran Quarterly</u>
McQ	<u>McCormick Quarterly</u>
NKZ	<u>Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift</u>
OTCF	<u>The Old Testament and Christian Faith.</u> Edited by B. W. Anderson. New York, 1969.
OTT	Rad, G. von. <u>Old Testament Theology.</u> Translated by D. Stalker. 2 vols. New York, 1962, 1965.
PH	Rad, G. von. <u>The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays.</u> Translated by E. W. Trueman Dicken. Edinburgh and London, 1966.
RBib	<u>Revue Biblique</u>
RGG	<u>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</u>
RIL	<u>Religion in Life</u>
SD	Rad, G. von. <u>Studies in Deuteronomy.</u> Translated by D. Stalker. London, 1963.
SJT	<u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>
ST	<u>Studia Theologica</u>
STU	<u>Schweizer Theologische Umschau</u>
SVT	<u>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum</u>
TAT	Rad, G. von. <u>Theologie des Alten Testaments.</u> 2 vols. München, 1957, 1962. Later editions indicated by raised numeral.
Theo1	<u>Theology</u>
ThLZ	<u>Theologische Literaturzeitung</u>
ThR	<u>Theologische Rundschau</u>

ThT	<u>Theology Today</u>
ThZ	<u>Theologische Zeitschrift</u>
TOT	Eichrodt, W. <u>Theology of the Old Testament</u> . 2 vols. Philadelphia, 1961, 1967.
TvT	<u>Tijdschrift voor Theologie</u>
TZT	<u>Tübingen Zeitschrift für Theologie</u>
VT	<u>Vetus Testamentum</u>
VuF	Verkündigung und Forschung
ZAW	<u>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>
ZThK	<u>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</u>

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CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In this section we intend to present the religious, theological, philosophical and scientific trends that worked, both together and against each other, to bring about a movement of Heilsgeschichte in theology, which eventually found its present high-point in the theology of Gerhard von Rad. A survey of earlier movements within theology, which illuminate the contemporary attitudes towards this discipline, must be evaluated by considering three separate stances within the history of theology itself. They are:

- (a) Protestant Orthodoxy,
- (b) The development of theology resulting in Biblicism
- (c) Theology employing, to whatever degree, the results of historical criticism.

Of Orthodoxy we choose to say little; its static view of Scripture is well known. The second movement, Biblicism, has to be understood by keeping in mind the orthodox position, along with the approaches of those utilizing the insights gained through the historical approach, for by and large the influence of and opposition to these other two views is greatly responsible for the way the movement took form. Next we shall review theological trends after Old Testament theology and biblical theology as Heilsgeschichte were supplanted by the history of Israel's religion until there was a revival of the former disciplines in the twentieth century.

I. The Origin of the Heilsgeschichte Theology

A. The Problem of Biblical History and the Historical Method

The seeds which preceded the bloom of turbulence mentioned above already lay at the door of the seventeenth century where an acute historical sensitivity is seen in the work of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). Following the methods of the humanists he developed insight into historical and literary criticism, seeking a clear historical explanation for the supra-historical aspects of biblical history.¹ He is credited with introducing scientific features into the study of history at a time when questioning the validity of sacred history derived from the infallible Holy Scriptures was considered impious, and when the applications of this history rendered any idea of development unthinkable.² He was also inclined to give a strict historical interpretation of prophecy within the prophetic literature, and would apply it only to Israel and her historical manifestations.³

The Dutch theologian Cocceius (1603-1669), influenced by the developing historical sense of his time, utilized this new means of attaining theological insight and produced a theology which suggested a progressive historical dimension.⁴ Although he was heir to the Federal, or Covenant,

¹H. J. Kraus, Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments (Neukirchen, 1969), pp. 50ff. Cf. H. C. Kogge, "Grotius," Realencyclopädia für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 201f. "Grotius," Annotata ad Vetus Testamentum, "Praefatio," where his views are presented, was not available to us.

²A. von Kuenen, Gesammelte Abhandlungen (Leipzig, 1894), pp. 181f., holds that at this early date Grotius was not only following the historical method himself but was responsible for helping bring it to dominance.

³Kogge, loc. cit.

⁴Kraus, loc. cit.

Theology developed by Zwingli and Bullinger with its companion in the theology of Melanchthon,¹ his work was also counter to that of reformed scholasticism that developed from it.² The reformed scholastics understood that all meaning was located in the "Eternal Decree" of predestination. Since the work of salvation had been completed before Creation, one need only support with proof texts the conclusions arrived at on the basis of the divine decree. The antithetical approach Cocceius devised saw the disclosure of God's eternal purposes and the meaning of God's encounter with man portrayed in the Scriptures as being revealed only to the faithful. This meant that one started theology from the position of "the saving revelation of God" not from a "deduction from a central proposition."³ Cocceius' attempt to formulate his theological system from within Scripture resulted in his discovering a pattern or system within the idea of the covenant⁴ which came at different periods in history in the phases of works, or nature, and grace.⁵ Thus he constructed a theology which was biblical in its origin and historical in its method. The covenant existed before

¹Gottlob Schrenk, Gottesreich und Bund im Älteren Protestantismus (Glittersloh, 1923), pp. 36ff.

²Charles Sherwood McCoy, "The Covenant Theology of Johannes Cocceius" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1957), p. 148.

³Ibid., pp. 153f. Cf. Schrenk, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴McCoy, op. cit., pp. 147f.

⁵Cocceius' theology preserved the Calvinist idea that God is in control of history, its initiation and destiny; yet within Cocceius' historical method, meaning is also given to world events and human decisions and responses. Scripture presents the saving activity of God unfolding as man's constant rebellion and God's continuing faithfulness in saving the lost. God works continually in history to produce faith which can come by no other means, neither Scripture nor nature (ibid., pp. 147, 150).

Creation as part of the divine relationship between the Father and the Son and was later, at the time of Creation, made with man. This covenant was a covenant of works, or nature, and was later abolished at the Fall. The covenant of grace then replaced it, and faith took the place of works in meeting divine demands. This "history" reached its conclusion with the coming of Christ, who fulfilled the covenant of grace.¹ Cocceius saw a history of salvation in the Bible which gave meaning to all events. This is the basis for theology. The Bible presents the idea of the covenant as a framework for this process of salvation. History is given unity and meaning by virtue of the covenant being the outworking of God's will and because the covenant is founded on and fulfilled in Christ. This establishes Christ as the center of Cocceius' system and thus

Because Cocceius sees in the doctrine of the covenant successive stages of development within the one, eternal Covenant of God, the system of covenants becomes in his hands a philosophy of history. The essential pattern of meaning in creation and history is understood as deriving from the activity of God represented in the covenants.²

It is important to note that not only does history as a whole acquire its meaning from the covenantal framework, but individual events acquire their significance here too. Thus typology is a part of Cocceius' historical method. Cocceius found forward-pointing types of the Christ-event in the Old Testament.³ Moreover, this system extends beyond Christ to the Church. Events in church history are also fulfilled within the framework

¹Ibid., p. 149.

²Ibid., p. 150.

³Growing out of the different ways of looking at Scripture represented by Grotius and Cocceius was the popular saying: "Grotius found Christ nowhere in the Old Testament; Cocceius found him everywhere." "Grotium nusquam in sacris litteris (V.T.) invenire Christum, Coccejum ubique" (K. R. Hagenbach, A Textbook of the History of Doctrines [New York, 1862], II, 247).

of the covenants. One can find reflections of the history of the church in Israel's history, thus all events take on their significance in relation to the realization of the redemptive will of God.¹

It is interesting to note that Cocceius found a systematic principle in the idea of the covenants which reflects a structure of doctrines he also assumed existed in Scripture. Along with this he constructed a history of salvation emphasizing that this history had a redemptive character.²

B. The Later Forces Affecting Theology

Principal trends that subsequently developed into distinct forces affecting theology may be seen arising in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By broad definition these are: pietism; rationalism, with its pervasive attitude reflected in nearly every corner of later thought; and higher criticism.

1. Pietism. This Christian group with its many subgroupings took basically a reactionary position, standing between the contestations of Orthodoxy and the more innovative approaches to theology. It is traditionally known for its avoidance of intellectual approaches to the Bible and its emphasis on religious experience. It was, however, affected by the line of theology traceable to the Federal Theology of Cocceius. Eventually this posture became known as Biblicism.³

Prominent leaders, who were also students of the Bible, were Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) and Franz Christian Oetinger (1702-1782).

¹McCoy, op. cit., pp. 151f.

²Ibid., pp. 193, 195.

³Julius Bodensieck, "Covenant," ELC, I, 628; K. R. Hagenbach, History of the Church in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (London, 1870), I, 115f.

The influence of these men was wide. Oetinger's work is said to have had definite effects upon Schelling and Hegel;¹ and both Bengel and Oetinger had much influence over the nineteenth century J. T. Beck, who belongs to the later phase of biblicist thought.² Of course the best known of all theologians affected by pietism is Schleiermacher.³

Bengel is known for his expositions on the ordo temporum and his attempts to show that there was a pattern of the "history of revelation" involving God's activity with the world from Creation to consummation. He thus held to an organic and historical understanding of the biblical revelation. For Bengel the Bible was not a textbook, but "an incomparable narrative of the divine economy with reference to the human race from the beginning to the end of all things--through all ages of the world as a beautiful, glorious connected system."⁴ The way this divine economy progressed could only be known from its end. Biblical events follow both a chronological and teleological principle. The eschatological events in the books of Daniel and Revelation supported chronological speculations which resulted

¹Ingetrout Ludolphy, "Oetinger, Friedrich Christoph," ELC, III, 1791.

²Kraus, op. cit., pp. 209ff.

³Schleiermacher was a product of both the rationalist's quest for certainty in immediacy and the pietist's preoccupation with religious experience. His systematic exposition of the religious experiences of man placed doctrines in the position of being expressions of the pious Christian soul. From this perspective he hardly noticed the Old Testament. His emphasis on religious feeling had such a wide acceptance in the nineteenth century that it undoubtedly influenced Old Testament theology. This theological view concerned with religious feeling resulted in overlooking the witness of prophets to the saving acts and this tended to deprive the Christian faith of its historical basis. See I. C. Rottenberg, Redemption and Historical Reality (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 36; and C. A. Auberlin, The Divine Revelation (London, 1864), p. 317.

⁴Quoted in C. T. Fritsch, "Biblical Typology," BibSac, 103 (1946), p. 419.

in his setting the date for the beginning of the Millenium as the year 1836.¹

The governing principle of F. C. Oetinger's theology was the "idea vitae." This was the concept of a higher life, the divine nature, the spiritual body. Everything which was spiritual was corporeal. History was the succession of God's free communications with the world leading to its restoration to him perfected over long periods of time.² This theology developed out of several concerns. The first was his opposition to the idea that the highest degree of enlightenment lay in reason. Second was his concern to bring the presupposition of God into all the sciences, an idea which he stoutly defended against the informative sciences. Third, he opposed the pietistic peculiarities of those adhering to the ideas of Jacob Böhme, Zinzendorf, and the Herrnhuters. Fourth was his opposition to the Idealism of his day, out of which he developed his concept of biblical realism. The latter had a powerful effect on the development of Heilsgeschichte theology. His opposition to the Herrnhuter's use of Scripture as a box of proverbs in order to further personal piety led him to emphasize "ideae directrices" and the totality and inclusiveness of all Scripture to attain this goal.³

¹Ibid. Cf. O. A. Piper, "Heilsgeschichte," A Handbook of Christian Theology (London, 1966), pp. 160ff.; and Auberlin, op. cit., p. 275.

²Auberlin, op. cit., pp. 288ff. See also Gustav Weth, Die Heilsgeschichte ihr universeller und ihr individueller Sinn in der offenbarungsgeschichtlichen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts (München, 1931), p. 22. Here Weth quotes Oetinger: "Kein Geist kann ohne Leib erscheinen. Alles was geistlich ist, ist auch leiblich." Weth, in pointing out how Oetinger's philosophia sacra influenced the later biblical philosophy of history, stresses that Oetinger himself did not emphasize the actual historical as the work of God, but that he had given the theology concerned with history a metaphysical basis.

³Weth, op. cit., p. 20.

2. Rationalism. Here we are concerned more with the pervasive influence of the rationalism of the Enlightenment than with a discussion of rationalism itself. Rationalism had a debilitating effect on religion. Religious matters were often handled without respect by its proponents and accepted theological concepts were often criticized and belittled. Reason was the supreme authority, and any ideas such as "revelation," "miracles," or "inspiration" were viewed as suspect or rejected outright by the rationalists.¹ This militated against the orthodox and pietistic theologies which held these ideas to be true. Besides, the Bible was in historical form and rationalists were skeptical of certainty being obtainable through history. One could not prove religious truths by history; truth was known immediately to reason. Uncertainty increased proportionately as the distance increased between the original event and the one considering the event. Uncertainty was also the outcome of the fact that reconstructing history rested on documents which had to be interpreted. Obtaining truth from such a procedure seemed impossible. Faith grounded in history would be subject to all the dangers of relativity history brought with it. Thus rationalism stimulated a search for a theology of immediacy and inwardness,

¹Hagenbach, History of the Church in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, II, 91f. This does not mean that all rationalists had nothing to do with religion or theology. Rationalism dominated the discipline of theology for the last few years of the eighteenth century and nearly the first half of the nineteenth century. Traces of it are still found in modern theology. The views of C. F. Ammon illustrate the attitude of a past generation and the relationship between the theologians and the church. He held the term "revelation" to be a most ambiguous idea. He would only attribute inspiration to the Scriptures where its statements could be validated by reason. He believed the results of biblical theology under such circumstances must not be made available to the public; furthermore, such ideas would be harmful to established religion (R. Dentan, Preface to Old Testament Theology [New York, 1963], pp. 24ff.).

something once could be sure of.¹ The common ground of immediacy between the rationalists and the pietists, although achieved on different bases, is obvious.

The antihistorical attitude of rationalism was overcome in some quarters by other forces. Among the most notable were the work of J. G. Herder (1744-1803) and romanticism, which stimulated interest in and a sense of being related to the past. Along with this went an emphasis on progress and development which understood history to have a redemptive character. The movement towards a philosophy of history began with Herder, progressed by the thought of Kant, Schiller, Fichte, Schelling, and climaxed with Hegel. All these men attempted to demonstrate some "plan" in history. Yet, in the main, the principles of rationalism held sway in relation to the dominance of reason and the negative attitude towards history as a place of truth and divine activity in the world.

The presuppositions of rationalism are clearly seen in the thought of Kant (1724-1804). Several points may be made. He refused to allow the possibility that anything could happen in the past that could not be observed today. "All changes take place in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect."² This law is identifiable with the laws of nature, which in turn are equatable with the laws of clear thought. With his exposition of "understanding" and its intolerance of facts that

¹A. Richardson, History, Sacred and Profane (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 83ff. See also Rottenberg, op. cit., pp. 33ff.

²I. Kant, A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason,' ed. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York, 1962), p. 363.

would not align themselves under a single concept¹ we have a presupposition of the completeness of a given inquiry which filters out non-conforming particulars. Any unincorporated materials mark the inquiry as incomplete. In these principles there are implications for biblical criticism and biblical theology. The possible must conform to the understandable and the inexplicable is understood to be impossible.² In addition he foresaw that religion would "gradually be freed from all empirical determining grounds and from all statutes which rest on history. . . ."3 From a summary of these points it is clear that for Kant there was no possibility for faith to depend organically upon a historical revelation.

Hegel (1777-1831) was the most influential representative of German idealism to affect biblical theology. He is responsible for making history the "prime source of knowledge."⁴ Because the real was rational, he argued, the processes of history would follow the laws of logic. History develops in accordance with the canons of reason. A philosophy of history was to understand its task as the unfolding of the development of reason in its historical course. Because the course of history could be rationally demonstrable there was no need for the empirical methods of the historian. The philosopher was to be concerned with the laws of logic which govern the development of history. The movement of history was dialectical, but in

¹Ibid., p. 175. Note: Pure concepts "must be connected with each other according to one concept or idea."

²I. Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, ed. by T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson (New York, 1960), p. 182.

³I. Kant, The Philosophy of Kant, ed. by C. J. Friedrich (New York, 1949), p. 132.

⁴F. Sontag, "Philosophy and Biblical Theology: A Prologue," RIL, 33 (1964), p. 228.

actuality this movement of Hegel's was only the movement of thought. Similar to his depiction of world history as an evolutionary movement which reached its climax in the development of the Prussian State¹ is the scheme found in his Philosophy of Religion, where he portrays three stages in the historical evolution of religion: (a) "Religion in Nature," (b) "Religion of Spiritual Individuality," and (c) "The Absolute Religion," by which he meant the Christian religion. These ideas had a profound effect on later Hegelians.²

Following Hegel there was a movement in the nineteenth century which became intolerant of all philosophies of history, regarding them as mere speculation. Again, behind much of its presuppositions was the force of rationalism. These historians appointed themselves to the task of developing critical methods so they could get at the "facts." Their method took the shape of methods employed in the natural sciences; history was broken down into fragments so that it could be analyzed. There were two primary tasks: (a) isolate the facts, and (b) formulate general laws, a task which always seemed to be postponed. If before, men had concentrated on the destiny of history; now, positivism would attempt to determine the causes of history. The aim was objectivity, therefore any interpretative category, such as faith, was suspect. One must find the facts behind the interpretation. One had to find things, in Ranke's opinion, as they actually happened. History was a purely descriptive and nonevaluative discipline. Attempts to form universal constructions were avoided. Miracles

¹Richardson, op. cit., pp. 290ff.

²G. W. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion (London, 1962) II, III. See indices of Vol. II for delineations of these three stages of evolution.

were denied on the basis that they were unthinkable (a decision based on an appeal to thought and the refusal to evaluate the facts).¹

3. Higher Criticism. Out of the new historical understanding there came about the historico-critical movement in biblical studies. The Bible was subjected to the same critical considerations as any other human document. Semler (1725-1791) is given the credit for introducing this principle into the study of the Bible as a means of criticizing the positions of the orthodox churches. Closely associated with the name of Semler was J. A. Ernesti (1707-1791), and his concern with grammatical-historical exegesis. This principle eventually led to modern historical criticism,² largely based on rationalistic dogmatism,³ which was responsible for the rise of those theologians who began utilizing the results of historical criticism in writing theology.

Historical criticism budded in the eighteenth century, but reached its flowering period in the nineteenth as part of the rational and skeptical character of the time. Higher criticism conceived its purpose to be the reconstruction of the history of the biblical literature, intending ultimately to understand the history of the religious ideas found in the documents. The critics, instead of finding a body of literature unified and revealing a history that unfolded according to a divine plan, found a diverse body of literature expressing a number of religious views, each under-

¹R. G. Wilburn, The Historical Shape of Faith (Philadelphia, 1966) pp. 98-105.

²E. G. Kraeling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation (London, 1955), pp. 55ff. See also Dentan, op. cit., p. 19.

³Auberlin, op. cit., pp. 288ff.

standable within the context of a different age. They also detected a historical development in the comprehension of the basic ideas within the religion of the Old Testament. The task for the critics seemed to lie in reconstructing this historical development that they detected in the documents. This procedure encompassed documentary analysis, dating the documents and, finally, full scale historical criticism,¹ which contributed to the classifying of miracle stories as "myths" and "legends" and regarded the biblical historical accounts as inaccurate and distorted.² The heritage from rationalism is clearly seen here. Many ideas that before had been circulating loosely crystalized during this period. The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the publication of Eichorn's important Introduction to the Old Testament and many other literary and critical works. The main thrust of all this work, both in scientific and theological fields, was toward liberation from interests controlled by dogmatic concerns;³ but in its opposition to dogma, the formation of the methodology produced a dogma of

¹H. G. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia, 1954), pp. 1ff.

²Auberlin, op. cit., pp. 1ff. In this context we do not use "myth" and "legend" in the contemporary senses. These words are taken from a statement of Auberlin, a participant in this controversial situation: "Respecting the Old Testament, says Knobel, De Wette approving: 'wherever in Hebrew history numerous myths and legends (i.e. miracles) are found--as for example, in that of the patriarchs, that of Moses, Balaam, Samson, Elijah, Elisha--we have accounts which were drawn up a considerable time after the events'" (ibid., p. 4). The effects of the manner in which historical criticism was applied to the biblical statements is evident by the way Auberlin begins his book: "Are there any acts of God? Has God spoken?" He accuses Strauss of excluding miracles on a metaphysical basis, i.e., maintaining they are impossible, when he failed to find any grounds for denying the historical truth of the record. He notes the emphasis on the "actual" and the "real" in historical and natural sciences, calling it a reaction to speculation and its methods. He cites a writer who affirms that the correct standard for determining how Scripture is to be measured as revelation is a theological and philosophical one, not one of historical science.

³Dentan, op. cit., p. 22.

its own that had important consequences for theology.

C. The Resultant Theology

The effects of the above forces caused theology to take two principal courses. One utilized the results of rationalism and criticism in a radical way; the other reacted against them. Part of this reaction led to Heilsgeschichte theology.

1. Rationalistic Theology. In 1787, seven years after the publication of Eichorn's important work of Introduction, Johann Philipp Gabler published De justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae. This discourse marks the beginning of distinguishing between the various theologies found in Scripture. Gabler made a distinction between biblical theology and dogmatic theology, stressing the former as historical in character and occupying itself with the thoughts of the Bible writers on divine matters, but the latter would discuss what theologians (utilizing philosophy and reason) thought. Gabler's advice on how biblical theology should be approached revolved around three principles: (a) interpretation of individual passages of Scripture by grammatical and historical principles; (b) comparison of points of agreement and disagreement; and (c) the formulation of general ideas without the distortion of materials or overlooking the distinctions. Systematic theology would then be able to draw on this work for its own formulations according to the needs of its time. His principles dominated biblical theology until nearly the middle of the nineteenth century.¹

Under the influence of Hegel's philosophy biblical theology began to take on the form of a presentation of religion through a gradual develop-

¹Ibid., pp. 22ff.; Kraeling, op. cit., p. 56.

ment or evolution up to Christianity, the absolute religion. Wilhelm Vatke was the first to attempt writing a theology in Hegelian terms.¹ He wanted to treat Israel's spiritual and religious development as a unit and to demonstrate the universal elements of the religions of mankind. He stressed that the task of biblical theology was to present the idea of religion as it represented the basic "consciousness" of the Hebrews and of early Christianity.² The task of biblical theology was to describe the movement of biblical religion, its general concept, its subjective and historical manifestations and its idea.³ In dealing with the problem of how true religion appears according to the time in which it is perceived, he formulated different degrees of conception. Different types of concepts determine how form and content are related. The lowest degree of conception is the degree of comparison; a higher degree is an image or picture, the allegory, the symbol, the myth; the absolute degree characterizes the history of Christ and the history of the divine Spirit.⁴ By this Vatke seems to mean that every conception has the character of an image, or a simile and myth, and to some extent it is symbolic; but these are to be distinguished from what

¹W. Vatke, Biblische Theologie, Part I: Die Religion des Alten Testaments nach den kanonischen Büchern entwickelt (Berlin, 1835), not continued.

²"Die biblische Theologie stellt die Idee der Religion dar in der Form, wie sie das Grundbewusstsein des hebräischen Volkes und der urchristlichen Zeit war, oder, was dasselbe sagt, sie stellt die religiösen und ethischen Vorstellungen der heiligen Schrift dar in ihrer historischen Entwicklung und ihrem innern Zusammenhange" (ibid., p. 2).

³"Nach dem Bisherigen bestimmt sich der Begriff der biblischen Theologie als Wissenschaft näher dahin, dass sie die lebendige Bewegung der Hauptmomente der biblischen Religion darstellt, ihres allgemeinen Begriffes, ihrer subjectiven und historischen Erscheinung und ihrer Idee" (ibid., p. 147).

⁴Ibid., p. 40.

he calls the true conception. The symbolic exists in many forms of Old Testament religion, but not in the history of Christ which is the true conception of historical truth. The "idea" is composed of moments. The religious myth is self-inclusive of the symbolic and places general and individual contingent facts in the moment of the idea in the form of a historical occurrence. The visible form of the external historical course of Spirit is only the bearer (representative) of the general and not concretely connected with it. Therefore, it does not represent an actual history, but only a history of consciousness.¹ From this it may be seen that the form which we see actually obscures the real facts. This type of idealistic thinking centering on the history of consciousness later developed into the ambition to discover a history-of-piety developed along the same lines.² It is plain that Vatke, although giving more importance to history as an idea and to the Old Testament than Schleiermacher and his followers, is concerned with the history of consciousness, not concrete history and the scriptural witness to it. In his exposition Vatke developed a docetic view of history.

Behind his approach lay the question that has to be answered individually by every theologian: Where does one start a theology? Should one concentrate on the spiritual, or inward, side of the life of Israel or on the primacy of the saving acts? Does consciousness make one aware of the saving acts, or are the facts responsible for the consciousness of them?³

¹Ibid., p. 43.

²Kraus, op. cit., p. 195.

³OTT, II, vi.

2. Movement towards Heilsgeschichte. While rationalism depreciated the idea of revelation and was basically antihistorical, several men were centering the idea of revelation in history. They, therefore, belong to the developmental phase of Heilsgeschichte thought. J. G. Hamann (1733-1788) and J. G. Herder (1744-1803) both emphasized history as the bearer of revelation and reality for the rational thinker. The distance between biblical and general history was scarcely noticed.¹ Hamann, attempting a solution to the problem of reason and revelation, was the first man in the development of a history-based theology to express the thought that all history is the place of divine revelation. While a "history of revelation" already existed in theology, now there was a "revelational history." However, according to Hamann, it was impossible to experience the divine as one experiences external facts of history. The divine cannot be mediated by a falsely derived activity which isolates and deifies reason, but only by an obvious revelation which answers to man's essential being. One can perceive in this that the revelational character of history, in particular biblical history, is only symbolical. The eternal does not appear in its supernatural existence among men, but rather in their intellectual capacity and in a form suitable to faith. In Hamann's thought, all history becomes a prophecy of something higher. This same idea was held by Herder. Each fact has a more significant meaning in the future. Prophecy is a symbol of the eternal and a type of transcendent history. The eternal world is the real world, the goal of all saving history and personal faith.²

¹K. G. Steck, Die Idee der Heilsgeschichte, Theologische Studien, 56 (Zollikon, 1959), p. 13.

²Weth, op. cit., pp. 32ff.

Thomas Wizenmann (1759-1787) deserves the title of a theologian of history. His thought was a unity of philosophy and theology. This was made possible by an antirationalistic theory of knowledge, one based on a type of "sensing." Where knowledge is maintained on the basis other than experience of obvious facts there is an empty illusion. Therefore, the work of theology is the problem of a historical knowledge of God (historischen Gotteserkenntnis) which excludes the goal of speculative or moralistic system. Here Wizenmann brought to full expression the will to crowd out the intellectual and dogmatic system. God is not the result of thinking or an ethical idea, but an active agent in a real relationship which comes into being in history. When man turns to God, the goal of revelational history has been attained. This relationship can be described in terms of one which existed at Creation but which has since been interrupted by man's rebellion, so it is the aim of holy revelation to restore it to its true purity. Thus the goal of the historical revelation is reached in a man who is surrendered to God. This picture of Creation is realized in Jesus, the Jewish messiah and the world's redeemer, firstly and foremost through the history of his people--which attains its human value within the rest of history only through its messianic character. Man's acceptance into the divine glory of Jesus Christ is then the goal of the history of the creation relationship. Here we see that the Bible has already moved into second place next to this history; it is secondary and only commentary and reportage of the acts and words of God. For the first time in the historico-theological movement, it is understood purely as a document of history. The theological method is therefore historical and not didactic. It derives the Gospel from the historical process rather

than from the teachers of the New Testament. If Oetinger had a philosophy of the basic biblical concepts, Wizenmann spoke of a philosophy of biblical history. Wizenmann, like Beck and von Hofmann of whom we will speak later, understood revelational history as the history of a personal relationship, the aim of which is Godlikeness. The whole Old Testament is understood as a prophecy of Christ and the Scripture as a document of history.¹

Another decisive factor in the movement towards a Heilsgeschichte theology was the influence of the biblicists, who had strong connections with pietism. Perhaps the most distinctive theological positions taken by the biblicists that separated them from the theologians concerned with a theology of consciousness were their emphasis on the primacy of saving events and their opposition to higher criticism. One of the first to express himself on these matters was Gottfried Menken of Erlangen (1768-1831). He recognized the diverse and composite character of Scripture written over a long period of time, yet he held that it testified to a unity gradually achieved in the development of the whole in which no part was superfluous. This was the unique aspect of the Bible and he attributed this achievement to its being mainly prophetic and historical, prophecy being the history of the future. Because the Bible was based on events, its doctrines always proceed from events and facts. The authority of the Bible came from the events and facts themselves and not the idea of inspiration. He held that the unification of these events had been ordained and ordered by God alone.

¹Weth, op. cit., pp. 35ff.

This unity he described as "gewissermassen zusammenhängend."¹ He paid no attention to the distance between himself and the biblical event. Nineteen centuries or nineteen days were all the same to him. The difference, however, was mediated not by doctrines, but by the fact that through the centuries there has been divinely established forgiveness and change in man through the power of God.²

Another biblicist following the same line of thought was J. T. Beck (1804-1878). He was opposed to historical criticism and developed a "pneumatischen Kritik." In the Bible the reader found not only doctrines but holy history. With this thought in mind he sought to demonstrate the organic unity of Scripture. This he did with the help of Hegelian philosophy.³ The purpose of his method was:

ganz dazu geschaffen, aus sich selbst heraus eine Theologie der Offenbarung zu postulieren und sodann in sich aufzunehmen. Wird die Methode dieser Philosophie ohne Vorurteile angewandt auf die theologischen Wissenschaften, so muss sie von durchdringender Kraft werden und uns endlich befreien von der Schattenbildern, Halbheiten und Steifheiten, mit denen die Scholastik in der Theologie die lebendige Wahrheit nur zu lang schon zersetzt und erdrückt hat.⁴

¹Gottfried Menken, Versuch einer Anleitung zum eignen Unterricht in den Wahrheiten der heiligen Schrift (Bremen, 1925), pp. 27ff.

²Steck, op. cit., p. 15. Steck's source is: C. H. Gildemeister, Leben und Wirken des Dr. Gottfried Menken, II (n.p., 1861), p. 115, a work not available to us.

³Kraus, op. cit., pp. 209ff.; Paul Wapler, Johannes v. Hofmann (Leipzig, 1914), p. 36.

⁴We have chosen in the interest of brevity to reproduce this quotation in a shortened form as it appears in Wapler, loc. cit., and again in Steck, op. cit., pp. 16f., instead of in its longer original form in Beck's "Bemerkungen über die Hegel'sche Philosophie aus Veranlassung der Göschel'schen Schrift: der monismus des Gedankens," TZT, 1 (1834), pp. 163f.

Beck's work was partially motivated by a certain antithetical attitude towards the debate between rationalism and supernaturalism. But more than that was his employment of idealistic philosophy to bring three things to light: (a) the living reality of Christianity; (b) that the latter's dynamic lay in an organically understood unity; and (c) its historicity should not be understood critically, but on the basis of nature.¹ Throughout his work he is concerned with the idea of promise and fulfillment showing that the content of the New Testament was the explication of what was implicit in the Old Testament.²

A third important scholar in this tradition was Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890). Delitzsch held that salvation, revelation and perception all had a continuous history which ran from paradise through the present until their goal was attained in eternity. The starting point for his interpretation was the saving events. Salvation was realized in a system of facts in which the solution to the sinfulness of man unfolded. In this continuous series of events the divine nature of salvation was guaranteed and an understanding of it ascertained. In his commentary on the Psalms he showed that his concept of revelational history was an essential pre-supposition to determining the place of the individual Psalms. He employed a method of determining the place of the text in this history that was similar to that of J. C. K. von Hofmann, of whom we will speak later. This method can best be described by saying it is not a historico-critical method but a heilsgeschichtlich method. The nature of this method will become clear when we discuss von Hofmann. It was Delitzsch's purpose to present

¹Steck, op. cit., p. 17.

²Kraus, loc. cit.

an objective divine reality, an indisputable supernatural element, by his work.¹ While Delitzsch at first opposed historical criticism his work later reflected its influence.² This is of interest in light of the theological movement that followed this period. Delitzsch was certainly aware of the impact of idealistic philosophy on theology. In correspondence with von Hofmann, dated March 26, 1859, he noted that since Descartes the starting place for speculative and scientific thought has been the inner consciousness of the thinking subject. There is hardly a credible scientific system of Christian dogmatics that does not proceed from cogito ergo sum, as understood from Gal. 2:20. Furthermore, he concludes, when the procedures of scientific endeavor bring together from the natural and spiritual facts of the case the inner characteristics of the subject in some scientific form which expresses progress, this is essentially the idea of the organic.³

For our purposes, perhaps the most significant biblicist was J. C. K. von Hofmann (1810-1877). The word Heilsgeschichte, in our opinion was coined by him and did not exist as an exact term before him.⁴

¹Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Psalms (Edinburgh, 1873), pp. 64ff.

²Kraus, op. cit., pp. 230ff.

³D. Wilhelm Volk, Theologische Briefe der Professoren Delitzsch und v. Hofmann (Leipzig, 1891), p. 30.

⁴Contra Alan Richardson, "Heilsgeschichte," A Dictionary of Christian Theology (London, 1969), who states that it was "coined in the eighteenth century and used in the nineteenth century." In correspondence with the present writer, Richardson revealed his source as the "Translator's Preface" to O. Cullman's The Christology of the New Testament (London, 1959). Correspondence with Mr. Shirley C. Guthrie, one of the translators, brought us the information that his source was O. Piper, "Heilsgeschichte," A Handbook of Christian Theology (London, 1958). O. Cullman, in personal correspondence

admitted having no knowledge of the word's use prior to that of von Hofmann, but asserted that the "Sache" was already present. After scanning several works written by Tübingen and Erlangen theologians which deal with the "Sache" and would likely contain the term were it in use with them, we are favorably inclined towards the opinion that the word must have been coined by J. C. K. von Hofmann of Erlangen. The earliest reference we found to the actual term "Heilsgeschichte," not "heilige Geschichte," was in von Hofmann's Weissagung und Erfüllung, I (Nördlingen, 1841), p. 8: "Also wie der Leib zur Seele, nicht wie das Kleid zum Körper, verhält sich der zeitliche Gehalt der Weissagung zum ewigen; und nicht an jedem Punkte aller folgenden Geschichte, noch auch immer in demselben Masse, sondern nur an den sich entsprechenden Punkten der Heilsgeschichte und in immer steigenden Masse kommt eine Weissagung zur Erfüllung." The difference between heilige Geschichte and Heilsgeschichte seems to be that the latter is more exact in expressing the existential element in this scheme. Holy history is equal to sacred history, or biblical history. Heilsgeschichte is more limited to its concern with saving incidents, seen from the perspective the saving event in the New Testament culminating in Christ. The different terms von Hofmann uses to express these ideas are almost overlooked by C. Preus' English translation of Biblische Hermeneutik (Nördlingen, 1880)--Interpreting the Bible (Minneapolis, 1959); hereafter Interpreting. The same may be said of O. Piper's "Preface" to this translation. Von Hofmann writes: "Als nun Jesus, der erschienene Heiland Israels, von sich sagte, er sei es, von dem die Schrift Zeugnis gebe, da waren diejenigen, welche an ihn gläubig wurden, eben hiemit in den Zusammenhang der Geschichte des Heils wieder zurückgebracht und einer heilsgeschichtlichen Betrachtung der Schrift fähig. Durch die Art und Weise, wie die Apostel in ihren Schriften das alte Testament gebrauchen und auslegen, kommt das heilsgeschichtliche Wesen der Schrift zu seinem Recht. Ihnen ist die Schrift das aus der Heilsgeschichte hervorgegangene Zeugnis von dem, auf welchen die Heilsgeschichte abgezielt hat" (Biblische Hermeneutik, pp. 9f.). Preus translates: "When Jesus, coming as the Savior of Israel, said that it was to Him that the Scriptures bore witness, He brought those who believed in Him back into the context of the history of salvation and thus they became able to understand Scripture within the framework of Holy History. The relation of Scripture to Holy History is given full recognition in the manner in which the Apostles used and explained the Old Testament in their own writings. They regarded Scripture as the witness borne by Holy History to Christ, who is the goal of that whole historical process" (Interpreting, p. 5). We may see the different ways von Hofmann uses these terms in the following: "Von der Erschaffung der Geister ist nirgends in der Schrift die Rede. Denn sie gehören nicht in die Welt, welche in Abzielung auf den Menschen geschaffen ist. Aber die ganze Schrift ist beherrscht von der Voraussetzung, dass es eine Geisterwelt gibt. Aber was in dem religiösen Anschauungen anderer Völker eine fragliche Vorstellung ist, ist hier durch seinen Zusammenhang mit der h. Geschichte verbürgt. Die Wunderbarkeit des göttlichen Waltens, ohne welches eine Heilsgeschichte unmöglich wäre, indem es sonst sich innerhalb der einmal gegebenen Gesetze unwandelbaren Naturzusammenhangs bewegte, beruht auf dem Dasein einer Geisterwelt" (Biblische Hermeneutik, pp. 83f.).

Von Hofmann produced three principal works: Weissagung und Erfüllung (1841-1844); Der Schriftbeweis (1852-1856); and Biblische Hermeneutik, published posthumously by D. W. Volck, 1880. In the latter he described the theological climate of his day to which his work was a response. He noted the tendency to depreciate the concept of miraculous salvation because of the belief in the natural development of man. The miraculous character of history, witnessed to by the Scriptures, was discounted and any scriptural accounts of this miraculous characteristic were declared mythical. But, argued von Hofmann, this history does not submit to explanation by the laws that govern ordinary life. Further, the critics did not understand prophecy in the traditional sense, but gave it the appearance of divination. Von Hofmann pronounced a warning of self-deception against those who followed such principles. They, too, were working out of a dogmatic position. Their error basically was their false attitude to the Scriptures, brought about by both Orthodoxy and the scientific and rationalistic trends of the time. Von Hofmann listed four principal errors which he felt were responsible for a distorted conception of Scripture. The first two applied to Orthodoxy, the last two to the critics. The first concerned an erroneous concept of inspiration (which can only refer to "verbal") that caused men to want to harmonize disagreements, beginning with the assumption that disagreements were impossible. Next, Orthodoxy had overlooked the historical character of Scripture and assigned the same insight to all parts of Scripture. The third mistake lay in the critics' negative attitude towards the church. Under these circumstances, they couldn't possibly understand Scripture. The final error was their depreciatory attitude towards the saving truth. Ideas concerning the natural development of man, laws of nature and reason

excluded, from the outset, any idea in Scripture that would contradict them.¹

Von Hofmann sought to correct this situation and to show how miracle, revelation and prophecy were part of Scripture. He intended to demonstrate that theology, though governed by Scripture, was a science. His idea of science differed from the ordinary concept of the discipline. He saw two ways of treating Scripture which were worthy of a scientific standing. The first emanated from Christian experience; this experience was a "fact" for the man who believed. Because this experience was a fact, what preceded it was fact; that is, the theologian saw the fact of rebirth and in this rebirth the whole of the heilige Geschichte. The beginning and movement of this history could be derived from its end--personal belief.² The other approach was a historical one. One compiled the whole of the holy history, constructing it from the "center" which the Scriptures identified. The unity and self-consistency of this history would be a witness to its reality. It would be valid for everyone who, through personal experience of salvation, was able to understand it.³ Von Hofmann asserted that without belief one could not attempt theology. Where personal experience of sal-

¹Interpreting, pp. 13ff.

²J. C. K. von Hofmann, Grundlinien der Theologie Joh. Christ. K. v. Hofmanns, ed. by J. Hausleiter (Leipzig, 1910), p. 5. Hereafter Grundlinien.

³Of interest in this context is von Hofmann's idea that the believer is the one who has experienced the reality of revelation and knows the divine character of the historical revelation. The historical is not merely something that one learns to know, something which exists only outside personal experience. It is a reality which surrounds a person. The theologian is not dealing with God on the one hand and on the other with man, but with God in relationship to man and vice versa (Weth, op. cit., p. 90).

vation failed, professional theology came to an end.¹ Even though this approach is advanced in the name of a historical approach its relationship to history is questionable. He took the liberty of lifting individual parts of Scripture out of their time and authorship and excused the procedure on the grounds that it served as criterion for constructing the particular history he had in mind. This could not be done, in some instances, with the assigned time of composition and authorship.²

Contradictions between what Scripture taught of man's origin and what von Hoffman called the "actual facts" were no problem. The same was true of his admission of the possibility that the history of Israel's origin rested upon traditions that did not correspond to what actually happened. The accounts of Israel's origin, however, fulfilled the requirements of holy history and this made it possible to understand that it did not depend on the natural order of things, but arose from the divine promise. This history was antithetical to the nature of the world, and the events in it were "signs" belonging to a different history. They had to be understood in the sense of what relation they had to Christ, who is the goal of history.³

A part of this idea of holy history was von Hofmann's idea that the history of Israel, not the words of the Old Testament, was prophecy.

¹Grundlinien, p. 5.

²One example is von Hofmann's handling of Zech. 6:1-8 and 11:4-7 in relation to the revelation of Daniel. These texts could only be understood by their relationship to the revelation of Daniel, so the revelation of Daniel must be older than either of these fragments. The opinion that Daniel was from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes was likewise wrong, according to von Hofmann, because the relevant part belonged to the time of Uzziah as did Zech. 11 (Grundlinien, pp. 2, 4).

³Interpreting, pp. 28, 31f., 72ff.

This history is a prophecy of Christ which reaches its fulfillment in him and his church.¹ But this history always carries its goal within itself, and this goal will be visible at each stage of its progress. In fulfillment the movement of this history becomes clear. Also, the future might be outlined in an earlier event in the sense of anticipation. Because everything became unified in Christ, world history may also be included in this understanding and therefore cannot be excluded from prophecy.² In this progression of the Heilsgeschichte to Jesus Christ may be seen the influence of Hegel's philosophy.³

Von Hofmann was distressed over the loss of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture when the purely historical interpretation was employed. To remedy this situation von Hofmann affirmed that the theologian should read the Old Testament with "spiritual discernment and historical sense."⁴ By "spiritual discernment" von Hofmann meant that one should recognize the same Spirit at work in both Testaments and in the New Testament church. The experience of salvation would also be identical throughout these periods.

¹Von Hofmann, like other Heilsgeschichte theologians, stressed the saving acts of God and the place of the church. The saving acts of God are the reason for the existence of the Christian community, not doctrines. This community is a fact in the relationship between God and man. In it one may learn how the community has been developed and is perfected (Steck, op. cit., p. 19). Also, the Old Testament records two principal things: a continuous series of events "in which through a reciprocal relationship of God and mankind, the coming of Jesus and the formation of His Church were prepared," and "statements concerning salvation which gradually realized itself in those processes," salvation which tended towards its "full actualization" (Interpreting, p. 134).

²Weissagung und Erfüllung, I, 7, 15. See also Der Schriftbeweis (Schwerin, 1859), p. 10; Interpreting, p. 135.

³"Was für Hegel die begriffene Geschichte ist, ist für Hofmann die Heilsgeschichte" (Steck, op. cit., p. 31).

⁴Interpreting, p. 134.

Because von Hofmann was concerned that his work be a scholarly interpretation, he divided Old Testament studies into two subjects: history and theology. The former discipline reconstructs the series of events in the Old Testament as a course of history moving towards its goal in Christ. The latter describes the history of the "proclamation of salvation" given in the course of the history. The former history describes the Heilsgeschichte moving towards its goal.¹ The theological discipline deals with the spiritual interpretation in the historical perspective of the Old Testament writers, who testify to the same salvation offered in the New Testament.²

To understand the details of Old Testament history four things were required:

1. I have to know that the history of the Old Testament is the provisional stage of that salvation which in the New Testament is realized and moves towards its consummation.
2. I must know the facts of this process and their intrinsic connection.
3. I must perceive the respective place which each fact occupies in that process.
4. Finally, I have to appraise the typological significance which each fact possesses with reference to the New Testament salvation on account of the place which it occupies in this process.³

Von Hofmann was convinced that if these rules were followed we would preclude the arbitrary interpretations which signified the demise of typological interpretation.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 135, 145. ²Ibid., pp. 145f. ³Ibid., p. 136.

⁴Ibid. The Heilsgeschichte school revived typological interpretation after its decline from the post-Cocceius period. Von Hofmann described the events of the New Testament as "antitypes which bring a preliminary history to its conclusion and fulfill a prophecy" (p. 169). The events of the New

To interpret the proclamation of salvation in the Old Testament theologically von Hofmann again listed four requirements:

1. I must know that the Old Testament manifestations of salvation tends towards those of the New Testament as their goal in which they are integrated into a unity.
2. I have to know their intrinsic development and mutual relationship.
3. I have to discern the place that the individual fact occupies in that process.
4. Finally, I have to ascertain in what respect the content of the New Testament manifestation of salvation has been given a preliminary expression in the Old Testament.¹

D. Summary and Evaluation

1. The Heilsgeschichte approach originated in the attempt to develop a theology historically instead of doctrinally. This is evident in the earliest representative, Cocceius, as well as in Bengel upon whom Heilsgeschichte theologians are more specifically dependent. Bengel, a representative of pietism, had a considerable pietistic effect on the development of theology, especially that of the biblicists.
2. The roots of this Heilsgeschichte theology go to the objections presented to the idea of revelation by rationalism and, later on, by the historical method based on a rationalistic philosophy.

Testament "belong to the same process as that by which they were foretold, yet they are not a mere serial continuation of that process, but rather on the same line they begin a new series which contrasts with the earlier one" (p. 169). He offered two points for the study of the facts of the New Testament: (1) "How much does their connection with the history which led towards them and the prophecy which announced them determine the formal aspect of these new things" and (2) "How far is the fulfillment of the predictive history or prophecy influenced by the newness of the things in which it is fulfilled?" (p. 170).

¹Ibid., p. 146.

3. The solution to these objections seemed to lie in: (a) replacing the battered traditional understanding of revelation within the idea of revelation through history itself, and (b) avoiding the direct results of the historico-critical method by constructing a different history which operates on a higher level governed by different principles of unification and construction and, therefore, not subject to the laws of the historico-critical method. This historical system, organically constructed, could then be used as an objective guarantee of the spiritual reality to which it witnessed and serve the apologetic needs of the nineteenth century faced with the philosophic forms of proof and the quest for objectivity demanded by the positivists.
4. The nineteenth-century theologians within the Heilsgeschichte were dependent upon German Idealism, especially the philosophical and historical ideas of Hegel, as a framework for their Heilsgeschichte schemes.
5. Because of their refusal to separate the immanent and the transcendent, they emphasized that the acts of God made man conscious of them and that understanding came from these acts themselves. They rejected the idea that man's consciousness was responsible for the origin and continuation of his religion.

Granting that the above points are the basic elements in the formation of the Heilsgeschichte theologies, what may we say about the special characteristics of the Heilsgeschichte theologians that set them apart from their theological ancestors? Weth and Steck made attempts to analyze these theologians carefully and came to some definite conclusions that, for the most part, seem to be well grounded. For a direct line to the Heilsgeschichte theologians, Weth argued that we should go back to Bengel not

Cocceius.¹ He criticized Schrenk for attempting to portray the later theologians of the Heilsgeschichte movement as being too conscious of their dependence on Cocceius' work.² The idea of history as revelation and the point of view of looking at the world through faith, he argued, are not there, and the interest in the time progression of the divine acts does not go intrinsically together with a personal interest in faith. Weth further asserted that too little retrospection had been made with an eye to the differences in the content of Cocceius' theology and that of men like Menken and those of the Erlangen school and the working of a rationalism in the Federal Theology which is actually devoid of history. Perhaps he was correct in directly connecting the later Heilsgeschichte to Bengel; certainly he was right in noting that Federal Theology was practically devoid of history; but direct connections do not exclude indirect ones, especially when the historical problem was just beginning to surface in Cocceius' time. Something similar may be said for Bengel. Although it was the organic and historical conception of biblical revelation, besides his detailed interest in the chronology of the Apocalypse, that tied him in with the later theologians with whom we are concerned, still Bengel did not display the characteristics of this school. Weth pointed out that for Bengel the important thing was the personal experience of salvation, faith in Christ's forgiveness; personal salvation was not actually grounded in revelational history.³ Yet, already within the idea of "economy" there was

¹Weth, op. cit., pp. 17, 18.

²Schrenk, op. cit., pp. 300-323.

³"Die 'zwo Hauptlehren' der Bibel von der Erkenntnis des Heils in Christus und von der die Jahrhunderte durchziehenden Geschichtsanstalt Gottes werden noch nicht im Gedanken der Heilsgeschichte zusammengefasst" (Weth, op. cit., p. 20).

an expression of universal and individual activity of God, because the truth of God is first comprehended when man recognizes that there is not only an individual but also a universal economy.¹

Oetinger's understanding of the Bible also fell short of an actual Heilsgeschichte scheme. The Bible only offered him an organic totality of ideas, and he did not speak in terms of a totality of history as did the later proponents of Heilsgeschichte.²

Hamann and Wizenmann both contributed something to the idea of Heilsgeschichte. If we note how Hamann stressed the personal certainty of his revelatio-historical concept, we can see how close he came to the ideas of the later Heilsgeschichte theologians. But he doesn't belong to those who, aside from a personal life of faith, have a theological interest in the description, form and laws of the development of revelational history. Hamann was silent about the progress of the science of messianic prophecy, periodic categories or divisions, or even a biblical historical system. On the contrary, to him the unregulated character of the divine history and holy books was essential, and forming a system was the "beginning of errors." He was not at all oriented toward the form but rather completely towards the content of the saving history.³ In Wizenmann's basic philosophy we have a closer connection with the Heilsgeschichte group. His was a history of a personal relationship, a revelational history, with a goal of Godlikeness. Old Testament history was understood as a prophecy of Christ, and Scripture was viewed as a document of history.⁴ These two elements are quite characteristic of the Heilsgeschichte group.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 32ff.

⁴Ibid., pp. 35f.

Menken is not actually a Heilsgeschichte theologian in the proper sense of the word, though his perspective was similar. He saw the complexity and variety of the Scriptures, the diversity of authorship and the problem of men writing in different periods of history. He also recognized a development in Scripture. But he didn't fully face the problem of history as it relates to immediate certainty. He was concerned with a supernatural realism. His common bond with the Heilsgeschichte theologians lay in his emphasis on the authority of Scripture being not in inspiration but in facts and events which have been ordained of and unified by God. Still, Steck asserted, Menken was not really involved with this problem of unity as the later theologians were. For him it was still "gewissermassen zusammenhängend." The later Heilsgeschichte tried to make absolute proof out of this casual acknowledgement of unity of Scripture in the interest of an objective Heilsgeschichte.¹

Von Hoffman, Delitzsch and Beck add the final element in determining the content of Heilsgeschichte theology: idealistic philosophy which serves as a framework into which the biblical data could be fitted and which, in turn, would provide a scholarly basis for the propagation of the Christian religion. Heilsgeschichte theology was constructed from the perspective, first of a personal knowledge of salvation in Christ, second, a "historical" development ordained and unified by the divine hand, and third, this divine process working within the framework of the idealistic philosophy.

¹Steck, op. cit., pp. 14f.

II. The Demise of Heilsgeschichte: Towards a History of Israel's Religion

A. Inroads of Critical Theology

Theologically, Protestant Orthodoxy was a losing concern, even within the conservative reaction. Hengstenberg, in his Christologie des Alten Testaments,¹ accepted the biblical pictures of history because he believed Christ was infallible. He completely rejected the idea of development. While his student H. Havernick² gave some attention to development, he too remained uncritical of the sources. But, due to the dominance of the historico-critical method, the traditional ways of considering biblical history and the history spoken of by the Heilsgeschichte theologians were becoming problematic. There were many theologians, apart from the defenders of static Orthodoxy, who were concerned with the problems presented by critical thought and yet attempted to maintain a somewhat conservative stance. In this class we would place: A. Köhler,³ J. C. F. Steudel,⁴ G. F. Oehler,⁵ J. L. S. Lutz⁶ and H. Ewald.⁷ Köhler, a student of von

¹3 vols. (Berlin, 1829-35); Eng. trans. by R. Keith, Christology of the Old Testament (Alexandria, 1836-39; reprinted Grand Rapids, 1956).

²Vorlesungen Über die Theologie des Alten Testaments, ed. by E. Hahn (Erlangen, 1848).

³Our source here is F. Hesse, "Die Erforschung der Geschichte Israels als theologische Aufgabe," *KuD*, 4, 1958, p. 4.

⁴Vorlesungen Über die Theologie des Alten Testaments, ed. by G. F. Oehler (Berlin, 1840).

⁵Prolegomena zur Theologie des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart, 1845). Theologie des Alten Testaments (Tübingen, 1873); Eng. trans.: E. D. Smith and S. Taylor (Edinburgh, 1874-75); G. E. Day, Old Testament Theology (New York, 1883).

⁶Biblische Dogmatik (Pforzheim, 1847).

⁷Die Lehre der Bibel von Gott oder Theologie des Alten und Neuen Bundes (Leipzig, 1871-76); Eng. trans. by T. Goadby: Revelation, Its Nature and Record (Edinburgh, 1884); Old and New Testament Theology (Edinburgh, 1888).

Hofmann's, was perhaps the first to see a problem in Hengstenberg's understanding of Old Testament history. Köhler perceived two parts to Israel's history: an actual one and a Heilsgeschichte. The latter was to be compared with the history of revelation, which was reflected in Israel's consciousness, or thinking, as the Old Testament community. For knowledge of the actual history of Israel non-biblical sources must be consulted. The task of the theologian was to investigate and retell the course of the history as it was reported by the authors of the historical books. Thus, Köhler gave the emerging discipline of the history of Israel's religion no particular place in his theology.¹

B. The Triumph of the History of Israel's Religion

Apart from the theologians mentioned above, there were some who employed rationalistic and historico-critical principles in a more radical way. We have already mentioned Vatke. E. Reuss of Strassburg, in 1834, came to conclusions much like those of Vatke.² F. Hitzig produced a work³ based on the foundations of rationalism which adopted a mediatory stance between those following De Wette's ideas and the reactionary forces in theology. The validity of the conclusions reached by the historico-critical method were being accepted, and the application of these scientific principles gave rise to the discipline of the history of Israel's religion.

¹Hesse, KuD, 4 (1958), p. 4. Cf. R. Rendtorff, "Alttestamentliche Theologie und israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte," Zwischenstation, Festschrift für Karl Kupisch, ed. by H. Gollwitzer (München, 1963), p. 213. Hereafter Zwischenstation.

²Dentan, op. cit., p. 49.

³Vorlesungen über biblische Theologie und messianische Weissagen des Alten Testaments (Karlsruhe, 1880).

The rise of this discipline seemed to bring a decline of interest in the theology of the Old Testament. This was particularly true after the publication of Wellhausen's Prologomena zur Geschichte Israels (1878). While theology was produced after its appearance, some theologians even rejecting Wellhausen's ideas as in the case of Dillman,¹ there was a gradual swing towards Wellhausen's theory. This is especially evident in the work of H. Schultz.² His work came out in five editions (1869-96); the first antedated Wellhausen's work, but by the last he had accepted Wellhausen's conclusions. His was the last Old Testament theology written for a quarter of a century.

III. Projections of the Possibility of Old Testament Theology

But this did not mean that theology was a dead issue. Men still thought about its place in Old Testament science. Admittedly, the kind of Heilsgeschichte pursued by Beck and von Hofmann could not be revived after the dominating influence of the historical method destroyed its speculative system as a theological science. Heilsgeschichte was replaced by the religion and the history of Israel reconstructed according to critical methods. The entire task of undertaking a description of the historical revelation in the traditional sense proved problematic. Therefore, if theology were to be written again a new aspect of Heilsgeschichte had to be formulated along with the recognition of the implications of the history Israel's religion.

¹A. Dillman, Handbuch der Alttestamentlichen Theologie, ed. by R. Kittle (Leipzig, 1895).

²Alttestamentliche Theologie (Braunschweig, 1869-89; Göttingen, 1896); Eng. trans. by J. A. Paterson, Old Testament Theology, 4th ed. (Edinburgh, 1892).

The theologian, above all others, who saw that the problem of theology depended on the clarification of the problem of history of Israel's religion and Heilsgeschichte was Justus K berle (1871-1908).¹ He clearly recognized that on the one hand comparative religion had described the Old Testament religion as just one of many expressions of man's piety, undermining the belief in revelation; and on the other, historical criticism had made the orthodox view of the Old Testament impossible.² K berle realized that the reality of the divine revelation did not exclude a historical development of the history of Israel's religion, but that the reality of the divine revelation was proved in it. Divine revelation did not have its history beside and outside the profane history of Israel but in it. Divine revelation penetrated the whole history, outer as well as inner. It was not in the communication of religious doctrines but was manifested in a series of facts, to be sure mostly of a spiritual type, so that religious knowledge must be considered. He specified that by the union of political, cultural, economic and especially the spiritual history of Israel, we would be permitted to know the reality of the divine activity in it. Above all, the history of Israel's religion must be compared with that of related peoples. On the basis of comparative religions, it could be objectively shown that the Old Testament is unique and superior to any other religious document. Thus K berle united the history of Israel's religion and divine revelation, but he began from the a priori of the divine revelation.³

¹K berle, "Heilsgeschichte und religionsgeschichtliche Betrachtungsweise des Alten Testaments," NKZ, now called Luthertum, (1906), pp. 200-222.

²Ibid., pp. 200ff.

³K berle, S nde und Gnade im Religi sen Leben des Volkes Israel bis auf Christum (M nchen, 1905), pp. 2f. Hereafter S nde und Gnade.

Köberle's uniting of Heilsgeschichte and history-of-religions has been judged the first effective attempt to make a theological statement in Old Testament science.¹ He pointed out that the task was not one of demonstrating the unity of the Old Testament canon or making a systematic statement of the biblical idea of sin and grace. On the contrary, he saw that different times produced different views, but also saw a certain unity being proved on a higher level in the repetition of these views. In place of a harmonious and systematized Heilsgeschichte, he was offering a way of theological interpretation which did not try to understand the historical meaning of every different fact in the Old Testament. There was no unification within a Heilsgeschichte, but instead the unification lay deep within the subject of the history of Israel's religion. Theological investigation could then accompany this process.² This was the beginning of a new theological question in Old Testament science. However, it was one that was not humbled by every new statement made about the history of Israel's religion. Köberle saw the value of the Old Testament as the preparatory Heilsgeschichte. The Old Testament gives us the knowledge necessary for our salvation.³

Another example of Old Testament scholarship seeking to define the place of the history of Israel's religion and Heilsgeschichte in the early twentieth century was Paul Volz.⁴ He attempted to understand the origin of Israel's religion. In this respect he considered the question of the

¹Kraus, op. cit., p. 382.

²Köberle, Sünde und Gnade, pp. 2-9.

³Hesse, KuD, 4 (1958), p. 6. Cf. Kraus, loc. cit.

⁴Mose. Ein Beitrag zur Untersuchung über die Ursprünge der israelitischen Religion (Tübingen, 1907).

differences between the history of Israel's religion and Heilsgeschichte very important. According to the purely historical approach, Israel was just one people among others. Its religion was assessed in the same way and with the same principles as any religion. Christianity was not a religion to itself, and the Israelitic-judaic religion historically united with it had no higher position than any other religion. But Christianity was the absolute religion, and Christ was the revelation of God. In this respect the Israelitic-judaic religion was inferior. The Old Testament was to be understood and judged from the perspective of Christianity and Christ. Thus the Old Testament was merely a preparation for the absolute religion, Christianity. Yet in this the former became a part of the latter. The starting place for the investigation of the Israelitic-judaic religion relative to the Old Testament and Christianity was essentially the same, the plan of salvation. Volz spoke of one biblical religion, but with this the problem raised by the history of Israel's religion and Heilsgeschichte became obvious. Volz probed more deeply into the distinction between them, deciding how the student of each category was to understand his work. The scholar engaged in the study of the history of Israel's religion was to try to investigate this religion in connection with the whole cultural life of the people; and, only as a last resort, was he to cross over the boundary to attempt an explanation of the religious mysteries of the origin of the religion and the progressing religious power which came from God and revelation. The one concerned with Heilsgeschichte was to be involved with questions of God and revelation. But any theological statements on them should also be scientific and not merely devotional or entirely hostile to science. Volz would include philological exegesis, comparisons within the

psychology of religions, etc., as tools for theological investigation; but in the end he gave no clear answer as to how he would distinguish between the disciplines. This was in contrast to Küberle who endeavored to be as precise as possible in determining the relationship between the investigation of the history of Israel's religion and theology. Volz seemed willing that the antithesis between the disciplines be bridged, but he was not clear how it should be done. He affirmed that a theological handling of the text was to be concerned with the Heilsgeschichte. In the first place, it was to be concerned with the religious and ethical content of the Old Testament; he saw in the Israelitic-judaic religion a portrayal of God-given pre-Christian religious and ethical ideas. The investigation of Israel's folk religion was only to be a means of achieving a theological goal. This made use of all works of history-of-religions as illustrations of that which is unique in the Old Testament. In this way, the standard of value established by the history of Israel's religion would not be displaced, and the investigation would remain scientific and unbiased.¹

At this point one must consider the entire theological situation as it existed in Germany after the first World War. This was the era of dissatisfaction with the evolutionary thought of the previous generation. Historicism, based on natural law, had excluded the supernatural from history in an attempt to obtain objectivity. But, if the presuppositions of Protestant Orthodoxy had been rightly questioned, the assumptions of historicism that the biblical evidence could be fitted without distortion into

¹Ibid., pp. 3ff.

an evolutionary scheme required questioning.¹ The revolution brought about by Karl Barth over this matter was felt in every quarter of the theological enterprise. Barth, strongly influenced by the thought of Overbeck, reacted against those who sought to bring Christianity into history so that it became a part of history. Essentially, Barth's problem over history came from Ernest Troeltsch and his history-of-religions school. If Troeltsch attempted to wrestle with the problems that historicism presented to faith, he seemed in the end to be controlled by it. The principle of analogy is the tool of criticism, "die Analogie des vor unseren Augen Geschehenden und in uns sich Begebenden."² In addition to the principle of analogy, he propounded the principle of correlation. All events are related and unified within an eternal flux. This excluded any possibility of a unique event, the miracle, thus nothing could be absolute or revelatory. This meant that Christianity because it was a part of history, subject to the transitory and relative nature of history, must come to an end.³ Troeltsch's visions of a future ice age was particularly repulsive to Barth.⁴ Everything about man had become historicized. Application of the historical method to biblical literature, church history, and theological methods produced disastrous effects. Therefore, Barth sought to describe Christianity in a super-history. Church history was the best place to learn to

¹N. Porteous, "Old Testament Theology," The Old Testament and Modern Study, ed. by H. H. Rowley (Oxford, 1956), p. 312.

²E. Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. II: Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie (Aalen, 1962), p. 732.

³Ibid., pp. 729ff.

⁴K. Barth, Theology and Church (London, 1962), pp. 60ff.; cf. pp. 9ff.

doubt the existence of God, he argued. If one brought God into history "the world would then disappear before God, creation before redemption, experience before apprehension, content before form."¹ Barth would not accept that the Absolute was in history, which is relative and passing. History was concerned with the creaturely.² But while positivistic views of history excluded a priori any possibility of God acting in history, Barth accepted the idea of sovereign, free acts of God breaking into history. R. Bultmann also reacted against history controlling Christianity. Both these theologians reacted against the theology that took history as a basis for faith.³

In the field of Old Testament theology the work of E. König, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart, 1922), was testimony to dissatisfaction with a purely religio-historical approach. Since the time of Schultz, due to the influence of historicism, the existence of a theological discipline which dealt with the Old Testament was not even acknowledged. The only task thought to exist was the chronological description of Israel's religion. In 1925 Steurnagel called for a renewed effort to revive the discipline of Old Testament theology. The immediate results

¹K. Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (London, 1933), p. 115; cf. p. 3.

²Ibid., pp. 77, 85ff., 115ff. Cf. T. W. Ogletree, Christian Faith and History (New York, 1965), p. 88.

³This transcendent history which Barth formulated has connections with that theology which came out of Erlangen and Tübingen in the mid-nineteenth century. Barth, in an attempt to extricate history from the natural process, utilized M. Kaehler's basic category for the history of revelation, das Übergeschichtliche. Kaehler, influenced by J. T. Beck, was struggling with the difficulties created by the modern world view and historical criticism for supernaturalism. He related the divine activity to history rather than nature, taking the nature out of supernaturalism. Barth, because of his particular stress on the Incarnation, uses the term Urgeschichte (Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 104f., 167.).

of this call was a confusing variety of pneumatic, allegorical, typological and Christological approaches to the Old Testament. Guidelines were needed to give the discipline definition and avoid more conflict between those concerned with the historical discipline and those concerned with spiritual approaches.¹

The first to lay down guidelines was Otto Eissfeldt. As he defined it, the problem lay between the absolute and the relative, the transcendent and the immanent as it focused on history and revelation; in essence, should the Old Testament be treated religio-historically or as Old Testament theology? Both have their place, but the interests of faith must not control history. The Hebrew religion could be approached either historically or theologically, but not by a mixture of history and theology as the pneumatic and dialectical theologians were doing. To mix these methods could only lessen the effectiveness of each. Each approach must maintain its complete independence. Revelation could not be supported by reason, nor could history be the proof that revelation had occurred. When one dealt with theology, one dealt with faith. Faith was the organ of knowledge for theology; and while the methods of theology must be scientific, theology must maintain its confessional character. Furthermore, the findings of theology would be acceptable only to one who was in agreement with the theologian's point of view. A historical interest in Israel's religion could be concerned only with the relative and the immanent and was an objective, neutral discipline. Faith, on the other hand, dealt

¹Dentan, op. cit., pp. 63f. Cf. OTT, II, 410; ThLZ, 88 (1963), p. 402.

with the transcendent and absolute, and its understanding could not be applied to the religion of the Old Testament. The historical study of Israel's religion must be limited to the Old Testament and should not concern itself with the New Testament. Old Testament theology would be a description of faith's understanding of what revelation is. Old Testament theology cannot be a historical presentation because faith perceives revelation, which is beyond time constantly recurring. Theology must be presented systematically from the perspective of what the theologian perceives to be truth; thus it will reflect the influence of a particular religious point of view.¹

Walter Eichrodt, answering some three years later and after the crucial congress of Orientalists and Old Testament scholars at Bonn in 1928, contended that the investigation of Old Testament religion should be studied not only religio-historically but also include a systematic work which would take a crosscut through the history of Israel and show the interrelationship of its various parts. One would see then the constants in the religion of the Old Testament. He saw no incompatibility between this method and the historical method. When one deals with the essence of Old Testament religion, he is concerned not with empirical-historical investigation but with the "thought world" of Israel. The historian should recognize that he brings his own presuppositions to his subject; and because a philosophy of history lies behind all attempts at historical inquiry, the theologian will see his objective in the New Testament. This perspective will determine how he selects and arranges his materials.²

¹Otto Eissfeldt, "Israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte und alttestamentliche Theologie," ZAW, 44 (1926), pp. 1-12.

²W. Eichrodt, "Hat die alttestamentliche Theologie noch selbständige Bedeutung innerhalb der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft?" ZAW, 47 (1929), pp. 83-91.

IV. The Revival of Old Testament Theology

Within a few years following 1928, there was a revival of interest in the writing of Old Testament theology. Following is a brief description of some major works resulting from this renewed interest.

A. Eichrodt's Theology of the Old Testament

The year 1933 saw the publication of two important theological works. Ernst Sellin published his two volumes of Alttestamentliche Theologie auf religionsgeschichtlicher Grundlage,¹ and Walter Eichrodt published the first volume of his great Theologie des Alten Testaments.² In this work Eichrodt set out to employ the principles he had earlier advocated. He defined the subject of his work as the Old Testament belief and its relation to its environment and the New Testament. One must make reference to its relationship with other Near Eastern religions, but the historical development of the Old Testament is not completed until it reaches the "manifestation of Christ, in whom the noblest powers of the OT find their fulfilment."³ Both Testaments are united by the "irruption of the Kingship of God into this world and its establishment here,"⁴ for the same God works with the same purpose in both. This makes a two-way movement between the Testaments a necessity in order to understand the full significance of Old Testament

¹Vol. I: Israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte; Vol. II: Theologie des Alten Testaments (Leipzig, 1933).

²Leipzig, 1933.

³TOT, I, 26.

⁴TOT, I, 26.

thought. To be more specific, the task of Old Testament theology is:

the problem of how to understand the realm of OT belief in its structural unity and how, by examining on the one hand its religious environment and on the other its essential coherence with the NT, to illuminate its profoundest meaning.¹

Concerning his method, Eichrodt made it plain that in defining the object of Old Testament theology in this way he had gone beyond pure religio-historical approach and broken the "tyranny of historicism." The presentation is both systematic and historical. While Israel's religion resists efforts to completely subject it to systematic treatment, there are spiritual values in the Old Testament and a process of growth which is enriching to it. Thus we "have the historical principle operating side by side with the systematic in a contemporary role."²

If we compare Eichrodt's work with that of other theologians such as Sellin, and before him Schultz, we find that they had historical sections prefixed to their discussions on theology. Sellin differentiated between the history of Israel and doctrines and faith, which he considered the work of the theologian. In Sellin's opinion, it did not matter if the historical events took place as recorded. The Heilsgeschichte, which had its fulfillment in the Gospel, contained a deeper truth for man.³ In Eichrodt's work, however, there is an integration of the history of Israel's religion into the general history of Israel.

In the matter of organization, Eichrodt attempts to derive categories based on the Old Testament's own dialectic and states his indebtedness to

¹TOT, I, 31.

²TOT, I, 32.

³Sellin, op. cit., I, 1ff.; II, 1ff.

Procksch in particular for the categories of: "God and the People, God and the World and God and Man."¹ The unifying element is the idea of the covenant, thus he has chapter titles reflecting the prominence of this concept.

B. Köhler's Old Testament Theology

In 1936 Ludwig Köhler published the first edition of Theologie des Alten Testaments.² In his explanatory statements he exposed his intended subject as the "ideas," "thoughts," and "concepts" of the Old Testament which are important or could be important. He stated that one may give a book the title of "Old Testament Theology" if it brings these ideas, thoughts, and concepts together and relates them.

Preliminary to such a work, he felt, were: (a) a certain degree of competence in expositing the Old Testament, and (b) a grasp of literary and critical work on the Old Testament, including comparative religions, for the latter stimulates an appreciation both of the uniqueness of the Old Testament and its environment. While Old Testament theology may draw on the above, this is not its proper task; rather, that lies in the synthesis of the ideas and concepts of the Old Testament. By employing this methodology, he felt he had confined his work to its "proper" limits. Because the Old Testament does not offer a scheme for compilation, he adopted the simple scheme of theology, anthropology and soteriology, which would,

¹TOT, I, 33.

²Tübingen, 1936; Eng. Trans. by A. S. Todd, Old Testament Theology (London, 1957), used here.

he thought, make it possible to assign everything to its proper place and give it the proper importance. However, he had difficulty in finding a suitable place for discussing the cult, so he placed it at the end of the section on anthropology.¹ The unifying idea in his work seems to be the presence of the ruling Lord, or God's majesty and supremacy over the world and man.

C. Vriezen's Old Testament Theology

Th. C. Vriezen's major work appeared in 1949.² He defined the subject of Old Testament theology as the Old Testament itself, not the history of Israel's religion. His reason for this was that the Old Testament is more than a collection of religious documents, it is "the book of the religion of Israel as it was reformed in the period of the exile under the influence of the prophets."³ In addition, the Old Testament must be considered according to its relation to the New Testament.

Vriezen began his work from the position that "both as to its object and its method Old Testament theology is and must be a Christian theological science."⁴ It will give "its own evaluation of the Old Testament message on the ground of its Christian theological starting-point."⁵ The method applied to the Old Testament must take account of the kerygmatic character of the whole Old Testament and its parts. All the voices testifying must be heard. Systematic treatment is necessary to show the

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Hoofddlijnen der Theologie van Het Oude Testament (Wageningen, 1949); Eng. trans. by S. Neuwen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, rev. ed. (Newton, 1970), used here.

³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴Ibid., p. 147.

⁵Ibid., p. 148.

interrelationships of the various themes, but it should be recognized that systematic treatment implies some arbitrariness.¹ While one cannot neglect taking account of higher criticism and history-of-religions, and there is to be no absolute separation between the data of history-of-religions and Old Testament theology, the method is to be different from that of the history of Israel's religion because we are concerned with a theological science and because we are dealing with revelation. The unity of the Old and New Testaments should be understood by recognizing both an organic spiritual relationship and a historical relationship between the Testaments. The unity of the Testaments cannot be properly assessed unless both factors are given proper consideration. There is a line leading from the Old Testament to Christ, but also a line leading to Judaism. Explicating the relationships between the Testaments will require not one method but the employment of several approaches. This is called for by the variety of relationships between God and man found in the Bible.²

Vriezen's Old Testament theology differs in some ways from those that came before it. He rejected Steurnagel's idea of a systematic summary of religio-historical research because it belongs to the history-of-religions and phenomenology rather than to Old Testament theology. Vriezen favored Eissfeldt's suggestion of beginning Old Testament theology from a theological starting point. This starting point is the Christian faith. Theology is concerned with revelation, with God's reality and the faith of the church. Therefore, theology is a separate discipline alongside the history of Israel's religion. He disagreed with Eissfeldt's abstraction of the

¹Ibid., pp. 150f.

²Ibid., pp. 100, 121, 137.

of the contents of faith from history, but generally he was quite open to Eissfeldt's methodology: "Only when Eissfeldt's line of thought is followed out consistently can we arrive at a definition of Old Testament theology which guarantees a science independent in name and content."¹ It is clear from this how he would evaluate Sellin and Eichrodt. Sellin's division of his work into the history of the Israelitic-judaic religion and Old Testament theology is acceptable, but the close connection Sellin makes between the two is questionable. Eichrodt's method is unacceptable because he confined himself to religio-historical materials. This meant that, though Eichrodt broke through the positivist's approach, theology lay entirely entirely within the command of empirico-historical study. Vriezen classified his subject matter as: "The nature of the knowledge of God in the O.T. as an intimate relationship between the Holy God and man," "The intercourse between God and man," "The community of God," and "The prospect of the community of God: God, man and the world in the present and the future."² Essentially, then, his concern was with ideas, concepts.

D. Jacob's Theology of the Old Testament

The first edition of Jacob's Theologie de l' Ancien Testament appeared in 1955.³ The subject matter of his work is the "specific religious ideas" in the Old Testament. Jacob defines his task as giving a

¹Ibid., p. 148.

²See Vriezen's table of contents. Cf. ibid., p. 151.

³Neuchatel, 1955; Eng. trans. by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock, Theology of the Old Testament (London, 1958), used here.

"systematic account" of these ideas that give the Old Testament its unity.¹ This theology will deal with the whole Old Testament and not with isolated verses. Therefore it can only be called a Christology because everything revealed under the old covenant, during a long history, is united and perfected in Christ. This does not imply that we should only understand the Old Testament from its fulfillment, but "objective" study lets us see the "same message of the God who is present, of the God who saves and of the God who comes, which characterizes the Gospel."² While asserting that it draws inspiration from all branches of study without trying to be a substitute for them, Jacob limits Old Testament theology to dealing "only with God and his relationship with man and the world," thus excluding piety, ethics and religious institutions.³

Jacob's method is primarily a historical one because Old Testament theology is a historical subject;⁴ thus he has no radical separation between the history of Israel's religion and a theology of the Old Testament. The former will "show the variety of the history and its evolution," the latter "will emphasize its unity."⁵ Jacob's theology deals with the active presence of God in history and is divided into three parts: (a) "Characteristic Aspects of the God of the Old Testament, (b) "The Action of God according to the Old Testament," and (c) "Opposition and Final Triumph of God's Work."

¹Ibid., p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 32

⁴Ibid., p. 13

⁵Ibid., p. 29.



E. Summary

When we look at these works as a whole several points may be noticed that are generally common to all:

1. They have all tried to go beyond a chronological description of the history of Israel's religion by describing the distinctive ideas of Old Testament religion in some kind of logical order.
2. Regardless of variations in outline and disagreements about the proper subject and method, all are concerned to some degree with a crosscut through Israel's thought world.
3. Regardless of their concern to hold faith and history together their concern is not actually Heilsgeschichte, and if this term be used in the sense of their theological task it must primarily be understood as the history of ideas.
4. Whether their consciousness of the Christian theological starting point is conspicuous or recessive, it is still the center of theological interpretation.

V. The Resurgence of Heilsgeschichte: Gerhard von Rad

It was because of this theological involvement with ideas and concepts instead of the Heilsgeschichte that brought about the revolt of Gerhard von Rad. With Gabler, theology had gotten onto the wrong track, despite the freedom the discipline had gained from dogmatics. The discipline concerned with ideas is the heritage of rationalism. Wellhausen contributed to this error by identifying the history of Israel with the history of ideas, the latter being the proper subject matter for the theologian.¹

¹OTT, I, 112ff.

A. The Background to Gerhard von Rad's
Old Testament Theology

1. Critical Work. Von Rad's work on the Old Testament emerges both chronologically and theologically from his study of the Book of Deuteronomy. In 1929 he published Das Gottesvolk im Deuteronomium. In the course of the next eighteen years he came back twice to the Book of Deuteronomy: producing in 1938 Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch, article five, "Das Formproblem beim Deuteronomium;"¹ and in 1947, Deuteronomium-Studien.² This is significant because in Deuteronomy he finds the important evidence of the actualization of the old traditions at a time far removed from that of Moses. Such evidence testifies that this was not something new, but that it was already part of an established form, which in turn was determined by the festival, of the renewal of the covenant.³ All this is of primary importance for von Rad's understanding of the relationship of faith and history.

2. Preparatory Essays. Three essays preceded von Rad's work on Old Testament theology and were preparatory for it, though much of their content is reproduced in his magnum opus. In 1943 he published "Grundprobleme einer biblischen Theologie des Alten Testaments;"⁴ in 1952, "Kritische

¹Now included in, G. von Rad, Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament (München, 1958), pp. 1ff.; Eng. trans. by E. W. Trueman Dicken, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays (London, 1966), pp. 1-78 subdivision 5, "The Form of Deuteronomy," pp. 26-33 .

²Göttingen, 1947; Eng. trans. by D. Stalker, Studies in Deuteronomy (London, 1963).

³W. Zimmerli, "Gerhard von Rads Theologie des Alten Testaments," VT, 13 (1963), p. 101.

⁴ThLZ, 67 (1943), pp. 225-243.

Vorarbeiten zur einer Theologie des alten Testament;"¹ and in the same year, "Typologische Auslegung des Alten Testaments."²

In the first essay, "Grundprobleme einer biblischen Theologie des Alten Testaments,"³ he gave the reasons for his opposition to the systematic presentation of an Old Testament theology. He stressed that the witness of the Old Testament is given through history. Although the religious literature of a people is determined by its history, in the Old Testament we have something different and additional. There we are confronted with expressions of faith which take their starting place from acts of God in history. He admitted that Genesis through II Kings presents a picture of great disarray, but still there is unity because its witness stands in the shadow of historical facts and in them is shown the way God has traveled with Israel.

The kerygma of the prophets is also to be interpreted in relation to this history, because they looked back to the divine facts of the past and projected the future historical acts of God on the basis of them. Von Rad emphasized that the category of history in the Old Testament is theological and that this cannot be ignored or evaded. If one frees the Old Testament statements of faith from their corresponding relationship to history, one still has many of the essentials of those statements, but the theological "Urdatum" of the Old Testament is neglected.

Von Rad emphasized that the Old Testament witness is not to words only, but to deeds of Yahweh; and these follow in a sequence over which

¹Theologie und Liturgie, ed. by L. Henning (München, 1952), pp. 11-34.

²EvTh, 12 (1952), pp. 6-33; Eng. trans. by J. Bright, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," EOTH, pp. 17-39.

³ThLZ, 67 (1943), pp. 225-243.

presides a many-faceted movement of promise and fulfillment. Theology based on the Heilsgeschichte has the task of describing the corresponding relationship of God's word and history in its different forms. Therefore, according to the Old Testament the Heilsgeschichte is a course of history set in motion by the word of God and is formed and moved towards its goal by ever-new words of God.

The historical course of the people does not have this relationship to the word of Yahweh. It is to be reckoned more as the movement of chaos. It is only addressed by the word of Yahweh where it is related to the Heilsgeschichte, or where it intersects the Heilsgeschichte. The older historical works lacking explicit evidence of the relationship of word to history still have the "Sache" present (see Gen. 12:1 and II Sam. 7). The Deuteronomistic theology of history is most explicit in this respect. God's word in his Commandments and the promise to David work in a two-fold way to create history in righteousness and salvation. The phenomenon of prophecy speaks his word into history and it works as the rain which "fructifies" the earth wherever Yahweh sends it (Isa. 55:10ff.). How else could we present Jeremiah's words about peoples and kingdoms being uprooted and planted? Formerly, said von Rad, we understood the prophetic concern with the symbol as a reference to the future, as description in advance, but it must now be understood in the reverse. The prophets are also involved in the history formed by this word. That is the other side of the unique relationship of the prophets to history: they can read looking backwards and can interpret the events of the present in such a way that history can be analyzed according to what it contains of the divine plan and coefficient of human obedience.

Thus the whole Old Testament is a witness to God's continuing historical activity, and the books (e.g., Job and Ecclesiastes) which do not have a part in this witness are to be interpreted with reference to it. Without history there is no community; faith will be fragmented by this kind of isolation. These propositions would certainly be the first and most fundamental lines which a theology of the Old Testament would have to follow.

Von Rad proceeded to show how the dialectic of Heilsgeschichte moves between promise and fulfillment and how a promise fulfilled becomes another promise. This leads to his discussion of the difficulties presented by the two pictures of history we have before us today: the picture of the history of the Yahwistic faith on the one side, and on the other that kerygmatic picture presented by the texts which was to become the object of his work. He spoke briefly of the relationship of law to the Gospel and then devoted the remainder of the essay to the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament.¹

In his essay, "Kritische Vorarbeiten zu einer Theologie des Alten Testaments,"² von Rad presented his case for the capability of the form-critical and traditio-historical methods. He discussed the work done on single texts and books of the Old Testament by men like W. Rudolph and then proceeded to what he called the "hohe Schule" of all literary work, the Hexateuch. He explained how Hölischer and Noth took up the work in this

¹See below, pp. 154ff.

²Theologie und Liturgie, pp. 11-34.

area which had reached stagnation.¹ At this time, he stated, we are no longer involved exclusively with literary analysis of the sources of Scripture; but along with literary criticism, we are concerned with form criticism. He praised the accomplishments of Gunkel in connection with the latter, and followed with a description of the traditio-historical work done by Mühlenbrink on Joshua 22. After explaining how the question of the superiority of form-critical analysis over literary analysis was still being disputed among scholars, as evidenced by the disagreement between Noth and Eissfeldt, he proceeded to argue that Deut. 26:5-9 was the basis for the works J and E, and later for the construction of the entire Hexateuch. A brief presentation of Noth's "Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch" (Stuttgart, 1948) was given as a demonstration of how the uncritical picture of Israel's early history, including the figure of Moses, was destroyed.

Proceeding to the critical work done on the prophets, he showed how the picture of the prophets drawn by critics like Duhm had changed, noting the effects on that picture brought about by form-critical and traditio-historical considerations. The origin of these critical tendencies is credited to Gressmann, Sellin and Gunkel, with the latter showing how the proclamation of the prophets was founded on previous traditions or those

¹Actually the work, initiated by Gunkel, was revived by R. Bultmann and M. Dibelius in the New Testament field. In the Old Testament field the work was carried on by Alt, Noth and von Rad. Form-critical work attempts to isolate the literary type, trace the history of that type and expose its Sitz-im-Leben. Another aspect of this work proceeds to investigate the history of the traditions. This work analyses the isolated tradition, traces its history and seeks its setting in life (K. Koch, The Growth of the Biblical Traditions [London, 1969], pp. 38, 54, 72).

borrowed out of some other area of life. Von Rad presented the prophets, not as religious geniuses, but as reformers bound to already existing traditions, which determined their proclamation.

Von Rad's next point was the breakthrough in the investigation of the Psalms. He noted the work of Mowinckel and his treatment of the cultic background of the Psalms, but explained that the interpretation of the Psalms has not always kept pace with the critical work. He submitted that we must consider developing the Gattungsgeschichte investigation with regard to sacral or other traditions from which its actual unity is determined. This investigation must be freed from the rather rigid formalism and superficial schematization that has accompanied it. If Formgeschichte allows the task to be dictated by the material itself, then it does not place behind each Gattung a tradition to which it belongs. Formgeschichte exposes the Sitz-im-Leben, the sacral institutions of old Israel, and these institutions are the principal bearers of the traditions. Further, one must recognize that the traditions loosed from their institutions were mixed and handled quite freely by poets, prophets and teachers of Wisdom.

The concluding part of this essay is devoted to the problem of developing an Old Testament theology.¹ He reviewed recent works of Old Testament theology and then passed to the differences between a history-of-

¹This essay and "Literarkritische und Überlieferungsgeschichte Forschung im Alten Testament," VuF, 1947-1948, pp. 190ff., are nearly identical. One important omission in the latter article, found in the earlier one, is footnote 48: "Auch in den Geschichtsbüchern sind Kompositionen, die nach dem Sinn ihres inneren Aufbaus befragt werden müssen. Die Gideon-, die Simson-, die Saulgeschichte laufen doch darin parallel, das zuerst die Berufung, dann das Aufsteigen und schliesslich das Scheitern des Charismatikers dargestellt wird. Von einem Schema wird man hier besser nicht reden, aber eine bestimmte und schon sehr reife Erfahrung der Jahwengemeinde steht doch offenbar gestaltend hinter diesen Kompositionen, eben die von dem fast notwendigen Scheitern ihrer Charismatiker."

religions, or a history-of-piety, and an Old Testament theology. If a theology of the Old Testament is to be more than a history-of-religions, or history-of-piety, one must recognize the particular creative power of the word of Yahweh. This word forms the Heilsgeschichte; it always stands in the shadow of historical facts and is active in creating history. This means that the layout of an Old Testament theology will be historical and not systematic. There is certainly a history of Yahwism (Jahweglaubens) depicting the acceptance and rejection of material that was originally foreign to it, a history of institutions and traditions etc., but this history is not the same as that history which the Yahwistic faith drew of Yahweh and his acts in Israel. In this respect, von Rad referred to the work of Noth which points to two subjects: (a) the picture of Yahweh's acts, and (b) the picture of Yahwism which stands behind it. The latter has its own historical movement. In it, the creation faith does not receive recognition until after the conquest, nor, to some extent, do the portions of the history of the patriarchs which were constructed from Canaanite cult legends. This puts into sharp focus the question of whether to treat the subject of Old Testament theology as the Yahwistic faith with its dynamic or the picture of Yahweh's revelation and historical acts which are sketched in various historical works.¹ An Old Testament theology must have two parts, but not one part which is historical and the other systematic. Both parts

¹"Natürlich wäre es möglich, eine Geschichte des Jahweglaubens zu entwerfen, in der von Epoche zu Epoche die einzelnen hervorstechenden Glaubensinhalte dargestellt werden, also etwa in der Zeit nach der Landnahme die Vätergeschichten, in einer etwas späteren Phase der Schöpfungsglaube usw. Aber damit würde doch der theologische Zusammenhang der Zeugnisinhalte, an deren Zusammenordnung der Jahweglaube selbst eine so grosse Mühe gewendet hat, völlig aufgelöst" (VuF, 1947-1948, p. 191, n. 47).

must be historical. The second part should not contain static super-historical (Übergeschichtliche) statements about God, man, world, history, sin and grace, but should be concerned with facts and note divine acts which were successively manifested in the history. It is not feasible to present this second part without a certain amount of overlapping, so any understanding of the Old Testament as a whole can only be approximately accomplished. This way of division is similar to that already done by New Testament scholars in dividing their subject into the Apostolic age and the theology of the New Testament.

The remainder of the essay is concerned with where various subjects should be discussed in an Old Testament theology, the idea of spiritualization and the scheme of promise and fulfillment. In the latter, a subject to which he frequently returns throughout his work, he speaks of fulfillment always becoming another promise; this course of promise and fulfillment is repeated in the relationship between the Testaments when Christ is seen as the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

The next essay, "Typologische Auslegung des Alten Testaments," translated into English as "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament,"¹ emphasized the nature of typological thinking as the "eschatological correspondence between beginning and end (Urzeit und Endzeit)."² This is distinguished from allegory and ancient oriental analogical thinking. With the rise of rationalism, typological thinking fell into disrepute and another type of analogical thinking, namely the historical method, came into being. Von Rad quoted Troeltsch:

Historical method, once . . . applied to biblical study, is a leaven that transforms everything, and finally shatters the whole framework of theological method as this has existed hitherto.³

¹EOTH, pp. 17-39.

²EOTH, p. 19.

³EOTH, p. 23.

After analyzing the religio-historical and the systematic presentation of Old Testament theology, von Rad concluded that this approach cannot do justice to the Old Testament as a history book.

The Old Testament is a history book. It portrays a history brought to pass by God's Word, from creation to the coming of the Son of Man. It may not be superfluous to remark that even the prophetic books are "history books," insofar as they do not seek to transmit teachings, truths, or the like, but rather to portray eschatological events in advance.¹

He then reiterated what he had written in the first essay about the Deuteronomistic history being the work whose theological tendency is most clearly visible. The other historico-theological delineations are to be interpreted according to its trends. Israel saw herself led by God's word from promise to fulfillment. This is the way Israel understood the course of her history. She did not see it as a "history of faith," rather she understood herself to be "snatched up into a divine history in which she was continually led by God's Word from promise to fulfillment."² The constant reworking of her historical traditions resulted in new interpretations. When a promise was fulfilled, it did not end there but carried on.

The prophets are cited as being responsible for dividing God's acts with Israel into their initial and final stages, the old acts taking on the character of promise or prophecy of a new salvation. This typological thinking results in the whole of the Old Testament's testimony of a history with God prefiguring the Christ-event in the New Testament. This is the "only analogy . . . that offers itself for a theological interpretation of these texts."³

¹EOTH, p. 25.

²EOTH, p. 28.

³EOTH, p. 36.

Von Rad summarized his ideas of the function of typology in the following way: (a) Typology does not confine itself to the historical self-understanding of the Old Testament but goes beyond it, recognizing in its facts a preparation for something future, something not recognized by the Old Testament itself; (b) Typology will deal with the whole of the Old Testament and not confine itself to a "high religion" or exclude such things as the "priestly, cultic religion"; (c) Typology has to do with the biblical testimony to God's acts, the credenda, and is not concerned with correspondences in the details of historical, cultural, or archaeological data common to both Testaments; (d) It will be aware of the limitation of the Old Testament relative to salvation and the role the New Testament plays in removing that limitation, but will see the time-conditioned salvation in the Old Testament as foreshadowing eternal salvation in the New Testament; (e) This type of interpretation goes beyond the self-understanding of the Old Testament text but should not be separated from exegesis. While it cannot promote the clarification of certain historical and philological problems, it is to be noted that at times the best historical exegesis is done from a theological perspective; (f) The exegete is relieved from having to find some meaning beyond that inherent in the event itself in order to make a theological comment; (g) Typological interpretation of single texts is to be performed in the freedom of the Holy Spirit without further hermeneutical regulation; (h) The definition of typology is an open question.

Von Rad affirmed that it takes the Old Testament witness to complete our knowledge of Christ. The Old Testament must be understood as a witness to God's word which creates history. In the acts of salvation and judgment in history a Christ-event may already be detected.

3. Summary. As a summarizing statement about these preparatory essays, it appears to us that the principal points made are:

- (a) Von Rad's emphasis on the clarity of the theological trend in the Deuteronomistic history;
- (b) His conviction that the traditio-historical approach was the correct way of interpreting the Old Testament; and
- (c) His belief that typology was a correct alternative to the analogical approach of critical methodology.

B. Von Rad's Old Testament Theology

In 1957 von Rad published the first volume of Theologie des Alten Testaments, Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels; the second, Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels, followed in 1960.¹ The first volume was translated into English by D. M. G. Stalker and published in 1962; the second, with the same translator, was published in 1965.²

1. The Subject of an Old Testament Theology. Von Rad's Old Testament Theology constitutes a new departure from the previous Old Testament theologies written. Instead of identifying the subject of Old Testament theology as the thought world of Israel, he chooses the credal statements. Identifying the subject depends on the results of critical research, especially form criticism and traditio-historical research. The subjects which produced collected traditions belong to an Old Testament theology.

¹München, 1957, 1960.

²Edinburgh, 1962, 1965.

Historical criticism had gradually destroyed the traditional picture of Israel's history, and he feels that there is no going back to it. Something new must be considered. Whenever "changes or new things" have been discovered by form criticism (he refers to the work of Gunkel) there has also been a corresponding emergence of "changed or completely new theological facts."¹ Traditio-historical investigation has exposed very different forms of God's history with Israel in its different strata within the Hexateuch, Deuteronomistic history and the Chronicler's history.² This investigation also shows how God's constant interventions in history stimulated renewed attempts on Israel's part to understand her history and how this brought subjects, already a part of her history, to be presented again and again in different ways. This presents a new task for a theology of the Old Testament. Research into the Hexateuch has shown that the picture of the history presented there was based on a few old motifs, around which various separate and unattached traditions grew. These motifs and traditions are confessional in character.³ This means that Israel's history does not depend on direct historical memories, nor does the course of the history from the Exodus to the entry into the land represent an actual course of history. These events are arranged according to a cultic confession; thus God's guidance is not shown by the way this sequence of events actually

¹OTT, I, v. See also I, vi, 106.

²OTT, I, v.

³OTT, I, 107. The traditio-historical approach resulted in the recognition of three things: (a) there is a "strong confessional element" in the material telling of an action of Yahweh, which can be called the "'kerygmatic aspect'"; (b) each historical action is linked to "definite foundations, bases of salvation," and each moved and was interpreted in view of them; and (c) "the foundations themselves already contained definite promises" (OTT, II, 411).

took shape in history but by the way these events are arranged. The Hexateuch is witness to different interpretations of traditions that have been "reminted" in order to make them relevant to contemporary preaching.¹ If the whole of the Hexateuch is built on a "very few ancient credal statements which became constitutive for Israel in all ages," then von Rad feels that an Old Testament theology would have to begin from them.² Thus, the proper subject of an Old Testament theology is the "credal statements,"³ the "divine acts of salvation"⁴ upon which Israel's faith was grounded, "the world made up of testimonies,"⁵ "the living word of Jahweh coming on and on for ever,"⁶ "the revelation in word and deed of Jahweh in history."⁷ Israel's faith is therefore based on a "theology of history." It regards itself as founded upon acts in history which were "shaped and re-shaped" by factors controlled by Yahweh.⁸

2. Method. As pointed out above, von Rad rejects a history-of-religions approach to the theology of the Old Testament.⁹ The picture of Israel's history given in the Old Testament is a confessional one, one formed and moved by Yahweh's word. It cannot be evaluated by normal historico-critical methodology. Critical research may give us insight into how the picture took shape, but it cannot explain the faith which constructed

¹OTT, I, 4.

²OTT, I, vi.

³OTT, I, vi.

⁴OTT, I, vi.

⁵OTT, I, 111.

⁶OTT, I, 112.

⁷OTT, I, 114. In asserting this von Rad rejects the idea that the Old Testament writings refer to timeless religious truths. These statements do not present straight revelation from above nor plain perception and presentation of eternal historical facts. They are confessional statements "drawn up by faith" (OTT, I, 107).

⁸OTT, I, 106.

⁹See above, pp. 58f.

it. Israel's faith is unrelated to the critical picture. "The kerygmatic picture tends towards a theological maximum" while "historical investigation searches for a critically assured minimum."¹ Critical research gives us a rational and objective picture of history as it actually happened, then goes on to present a picture of Israel's faith, her religion. But in the kerygmatic picture we are concerned with how faith perceives and presents things. Poetry is an important characteristic of this presentation; by this means Israel was able to determine the "location" and "significance" of events. By poetry the past was made "absolutely present."² Thus the historical element is "perceived,"³ "interpreted,"⁴ and "reflected."⁵ Von Rad gives this picture of the history a place of its own and allows it to stand side by side with the critical picture without reconciliation.⁶

It should be clear that if the traditio-historical method has been responsible for identifying the proper subject of an Old Testament theology as the credal statements, the same method must be employed to interpret the Old Testament.⁷ Von Rad explains his work as an attempt to identify as clearly as possible, with the help of Formgeschichte, the theological statement of every single body of tradition.⁸ But the important thing for von Rad is not a chronological presentation of Israel's credal statements, but rather that the material be left as Israel arranged it. This allows us to observe Israel's most important theological activities, "namely those ever new attempts to make the divine acts of salvation relevant for every new

¹OTT, I, 108.

²OTT, I, 109.

³OTT, I, 108.

⁴OTT, I, 3ff.

⁵OTT, I, 117.

⁶OTT, I, 107.

⁷OTT, I, 106ff. See also Theologie und Liturgie, pp. 18f.

⁸TAT, II, 11.

age and day,"¹ to "actualize" them.² This was achieved through "reinterpretation,"³ "adaption,"⁴ and "co-ordination."⁵

Von Rad does not think it proper to work for a unity of the Old Testament through ideas. When he looks at the Old Testament, he sees a "number of distinct and heterogeneous revelatory acts."⁶ Furthermore, the Old Testament does not contain one theology but a number of different theologies. It should also be realized that each testimony was relevant only during the time it was actualized, at a specific moment in her faith. This further means that the unity of Israel and her history was a confessional one.⁷ The Old Testament, in contrast to the New Testament revelation in Christ, lacks a "center" (Mitte)⁸ which determines the theological connections and the interpretation of the separate divine acts. But there is a "strong

¹OTT, I, vi.

²OTT, I, 119; II, 414.

³OTT, II, 240, 322.

⁴OTT, II, 48, 328, 385.

⁵OTT, II, 418.

⁶OTT, I, 115. Cf. II, 411.

⁷OTT, II, 412, 414, 415.

⁸OTT, I, 115. A word should be said about the exclusion of this Mitte as a category of thought. Because the old history-of-religions school proceeded from religious ideas and presuppositions which came from the history of ideas, one looked for the "idea" of God or piety expressed in the cult. But those who follow the new approach to Israel's religion via form criticism and history-of-traditions think this is a foreign principle by which to measure phenomena. They are, therefore, critical of it. The new approach sees religion and cult together. Cult is "happening" religion. Because religion is cultic event, it is no longer possible to see religion from a one-sided angle of religious ideas or thinking. With this rejection of the basic presupposition of the "old" history-of-religions school, ideas can no longer satisfy the demand to unify the Old Testament. On the basis of the new way of investigation, one attempts to find a "Grundstruktur" of Israel's religion. Von Rad, however, not only appears to exclude the Grundgedanke but also the Grundstruktur in his emphasis on the divergencies within the Old Testament. (See C. Westermann, "Das Verhältniss des Jahweglaubens zu den ausserisraelitischen Religionen," Forschung am Alten Testament [München, 1964], pp. 189ff., especially pp. 192f; and Westermann's comment to us, see below p. 227, n. 1.

tendency towards unification"¹ in the composition of this history which does not come through to the reader. Yahweh is always concerned with Israel as a "unity;" "all Israel" must be included in the history and the different pictures of the history are the "result of Israel's thinking about herself, a process which was constantly operative in the history."² In order to unfold the kerygma theologically, we must be aware that Israel's literary treatment of the traditional material was itself a theological undertaking. But her theological thinking is "absolutely lacking in theological 'systematics.'"³ Israel's effort to systematize the contents of her faith, or unify it conceptually, must be considered embryonic. For von Rad this means that "from first to last Israel manifestly takes as her starting-point the absolute priority in theology of event over 'logos'."⁴ "Hebrew thinking is thinking in historical traditions," and "historical grouping always takes precedence over intellectual and theological grouping."⁵ God always "'glorified himself' in his acts," and the "doxa of his activity was made visible beyond all possibility of doubt." The event was recognized as a "sign" and even an "actual miracle."⁶

Because of the peculiar characteristics of this presentation of history, in contrast to rational and logical presentations, and because we cannot separate Israel's theological thinking from her understanding of history, we have to submit ourselves to the sequence of events as Israel arranged them. Thus the task of Old Testament theology is "re-telling" the Heilsgeschichte. This is the "most legitimate way" of doing theology.⁷

¹OTT, I, 118.

²OTT, I, 118f.

³OTT, I, 116.

⁴OTT, I, 116.

⁵OTT, I, 116.

⁶OTT, II, 358.

⁷OTT, I, 121.

3. Evaluation of Other Old Testament Theologies. Von Rad's evaluation of other Old Testament theologies is largely dependent on his conviction that rationalism has been responsible for the way these theologies have understood their task. Ever since Gabler, biblical theology has been controlled by rationalistic tendencies. This rationalistic dominance made the connection between Old Testament theology and the Old Testament more "unilinear and abstract--in a word, poorer."¹ Old Testament theologians conceived of its task as the construction of a history-of-piety and of Israel's consciousness. Thus they did not pay attention to the Old Testament's testimony to itself. Basically, there have been two ways of approaching a theology of the Old Testament. One is via Israel's religious ideas and their bearing upon the truths of Christianity, the other is by way of the Heilsgeschichte. Typical of the former have been the Old Testament theologies written from the time of Vatke.²

¹OTT, I, 113.

²OTT, I, 114f.; II, vi. Von Rad sees a particular affinity between his own ideas of the proper object of Old Testament theology and those of the theologians we have referred to as biblicists (OTT, II, v, vi). He has apparently at some time acknowledged his debt to von Hofmann (Dentan, op. cit., p. 48, n. 28). Von Rad states that these men did not accept the idea that was dominant in theology in which the spiritual life and the contents of the consciousness of Israel was the object of concentration. The centrality of the saving acts suggested to them that the proper place to begin theology was not man's consciousness but these acts of God. Yet, von Rad is opposed to their concern for an objective Heilsgeschichte. He admits that the historical data in the Old Testament is of great interest, but the way it was reinterpreted and made relevant to new situations rules out any idea of objectification which these men stressed so much. Von Rad calls attention instead to the multiplicity of histories, theologies, and to discontinuity in revelation (OTT, I, 115, 119; II, vi, 362).

Von Rad's separation of Heilsgeschichte from history-of-religions because it is formed and moved by Yahweh's word, which is also promise, is similar to von Hofmann's separation of the Heilsgeschichte from normal history because it arose from the divine promise and was contrary to laws of nature.

Although von Rad does not make a point of comparing his methodology

a. Schultz, Dillman, Sellin and Procksch. While von Rad agrees that religio-historical studies have given us a better understanding of the unique characteristics of Israel's religion and acted to counter the influence of philosophy, he still does not accept the idea that theology should be concerned with Israel's spiritual and religious accomplishments. Illustrative of this latter type of theology are the theologies of Schultz, Dillman, Sellin and Procksch, who divide their work into two parts: one dealing with Israel's history; the other with her religious ideas. While earlier works on Israel's religion were merely a reflection of modern European Protestant religion, more modern works are still concerned more with Israel's spiritual life, her religious ideas, than with the proper subject of her faith, "the revelation in word and deed of Jahweh in history."¹

with the guidelines set down by Eissfeldt, the similarities are marked. Eissfeldt separated history from theology, claiming they had nothing to do with one another. Von Rad holds the faith to have nothing to do with the historico-critical picture. Eissfeldt was favorable to the opinions of the dialectical theologians, especially Barth and Thurneysen. The latter asserted that reason could not lend support to revelation nor could revelation be confirmed by an appeal to historical events. Von Rad is of the opinion that the history which is theologically relevant is not rational and objective but confessional, and that it was valid for those who were prepared to ask the same questions and receive the same answers. Eissfeldt also stressed the confessional nature of theology; only he stated that the results of theology would be valid only for those who agreed with the theologian's point of view. This seems to be the same kind of an idea as von Rad's, though it appears he uses it in reference to the Yahwist, Elohist, etc. Von Rad differs from Eissfeldt methodologically in that Eissfeldt recommended a systematic approach that would identify revelation with timeless truths, although these were not provable by reason.

¹OTT, I, 114. See also I, 112ff.; II, vi, vi. Von Rad affirms that the concept that there was an abstract complex of ideas about God's relations with man that could be termed the religion of Israel has turned out to be a misconception. The Old Testament witness to the importance of the acts of God has itself made this approach, which is concerned with Israel's piety, ideas and with eternal truths, seem inadequate (OTT, II, 368).

b. Eichrodt. Von Rad acknowledges that Eichrodt's theology signalled a definite improvement in the theological situation, but he thinks that because it deals with the spiritual and inward life of Israel, it does not do justice to the relationship of the material to history.¹ What can von Rad mean, in view of the fact that Eichrodt has given his theology a historical as well as a systematic treatment? The answer appears to lie in von Rad's dependence upon traditio-historical criticism. Eichrodt, like most others, still clings to the unilinear sequence of events from the bondage in Egypt to the entry into the land. In essence, von Rad is saying that Eichrodt has not recognized the significance of traditio-historical criticism on the picture of Israel's early history and therefore does not do justice to the movement of this history. He also believes he sees serious problems in Eichrodt's scheme for the rest of the Old Testament. For instance, the royal theology has nothing in common with the covenant theology. The king was never an "organ of the covenant;" this picture was created only after the fusion of diverse traditions.² Here then is von Rad's real disagreement with Eichrodt, as well as others, and the reason for his insistence that the traditio-historical interpretation is the proper one. Von Rad insists that this new insight has destroyed previous theological achievements.³

c. Others. The above opinion seems to be borne out by von Rad's remarks about Jacob's and Vriezen's works. He notes that there has been a characteristic "convergence," a "mutual intersection," in the last twenty or so years between introductory studies and biblical theology; but he

¹OTT, II, vi, vii. ²OTT, II, 412. ³OTT, II, 412.

credits the work of Gunkel with bringing to view new theological facts which have helped identify the correct subject of an Old Testament theology.¹ Again, the difference is the traditio-historical research of which von Rad is master. He takes exception to Jacob presenting the prophetic message in a separate section concerned with Israel's thought about her future. Again, he does this within a context that explains how history-of-traditions shows the prophets' break with the past history of Israel.²

4. The Arrangement of von Rad's Old Testament Theology. Part one, volume one, of Old Testament Theology presents "A History of Jahwism and of the Sacral Institutions in Israel in Outline," and part two is "The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions." This separates the history of Yahwism from the theology of the historical traditions. In von Rad's words, "This first part . . . is merely intended to show those subjects, the knowledge of which is presupposed by the second part, in their historical connections."³ Both parts are the result of handling the biblical material via the traditio-historical method, the difference in presentation being one of organization. The first is organized according to historico-critical categories, while the second is arranged according to the picture of the Heilsgeschichte in the old summaries and the development of the David-Zion tradition. Wisdom and Psalms are accorded to Israel's answer. The chapters in part one are entitled: A. "Origins," B. "The Crisis Due to the Conquest," C. "Crisis Due to the Formation of the State," D. "Endeavours to Restore the Past," E. "The Constituting of the Post-exilic

¹OTT, I, v, vi. Actually von Rad's statement of the twenty or thirty years transpiring since Old Testament theology and introductory studies converged is now more like thirty-five to forty years.

²OTT, I, 128.

³OTT, I, vii.

Community," and F. "Sacral Office and Charisma in Ancient Israel." The contents of part two are: A. "Methodological Presuppositions," B. "The Theology of the Hexateuch," C. "Israel's Anointed," and D. "Israel Before Jahweh." Part two "B", which actually deals with the subject of a theology of the Hexateuch arranged according to the basic events in the Heilsgeschichte, is followed by "C", theology built from the foundation of the covenant with David presenting both "The Deuteronomist's Theology of History," and "The Historical Work of the Chronicler" under the heading of "Israel's Anointed." The chapter "Israel Before Jahweh (Israel's Answer)" treats the Psalms and Wisdom, material that does not fit into a discussion of Yahweh's acts with Israel because they do not present a closed body of traditions, as Israel's answer to the acts.

The second volume, true to von Rad's methodological proceedings, separates prophecy from a discussion within the context of the rest of the Old Testament. Part one of this volume presents "General Considerations in Prophecy," under which fall seven chapters: A. "Introduction," B. "Prophecy Before the Classical Period," C. "The Oral Tradition of Prophecy," D. "The Prophet's Call and Reception of Revelation," E. "The Prophet's Freedom," F. "The Prophet's Conception of the Word of God," G. "Israel's Ideas About Time and History, and the Prophetic Eschatology." Part two presents "Classical Prophecy." The chapters are: A. "Amos and Hosea," B. "Isaiah and Micah," C. "The New Element in Eighth-Century Prophecy," D. "The Age of Jeremiah," E. "Ezekiel," F. "Deutero-Isaiah," G. "The New Element in Prophecy in the Babylonian and Early Persian Period," H. "The Prophets of the Later Persian Period and the Prophecies of the New Jerusalem," I. "Daniel and Apocalyptic." Part three is called "The

Old Testament and the New." There are five chapters: A. "The Actualisation of the Old Testament in the New," B. "The Old Testament's Understanding of the World and Man, and Christianity," C. "The Old Testament Saving Event in the Light of the New Testament Fulfilment," D. "The Law," E. "Postscript."

CHAPTER TWO

THE EXPOSITION OF VON RAD'S UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY

I. General Considerations of the Confessional History and Time

A. History

Von Rad affirms that whenever we attempt to understand Israel's testimonies by our own concept of history we are employing a standard foreign to Israel and to her world, one that can only be disruptive to her intentions. Israel, like other nations of her time, did not give authentic accounts of her history. Using her traditions, she expressed her history figuratively. Although there are different kinds of traditions, i.e., cultic aetiological narratives, ethnic aetiological narratives and fictional poems, most of these traditions are sagas.¹ Israel expressed her historical experiences by these and other means; there was a sublimation of "experiences" into "words", "stories" and "songs".² Because Israel expressed her experiences in sagas we must avoid comparing them with Historie, that is, critical historiography, although both activities

¹OTT, II, 99ff., 419f., 424; Genesis, 2nd ed. (London, 1966), 30ff.; TAT⁵, II, 442ff. A 9th ed. of Das erste Buch Mose, Genesis has been published (Göttingen, 1972) and a revised edition in English based on the 9th German ed. has been published (Philadelphia, 1973). While we could only scan the latter briefly before this went to the typist, we did not find any significant changes which would alter our opinions.

²OTT, II, 419.

involve Geschichte. Saga results from a different mode of perception than does Historie. The saga is to be believed. Historie is careful to give an exact description of everything. When what saga says is compared with Historie the components of the saga appear distorted or clouded. Saga expresses the "instinctive," almost "mantic" understanding of a people who have not yet developed their rational and logical powers of perception with regard to history.¹ Quoting A. J. Jolles (Einfache Formen [Halle, 1930], p. 64) von Rad affirms that Historie is "an enemy of the saga; it threatens it, it waylays it, it slanders it and perverts the words in its mouth." Further what "was positive in the saga becomes negative" in Historie.² When one asks about a historical kernel in the stories, it makes that which is not part of this core appear to be fiction. A more comprehensive definition of history will be needed than is generally acceptable today, if what the saga says is to be rightly understood. Saga manifests a spiritual perception which is none the less involved with the past and its decisive influence for the present. It is involved with history, although it is not the same as history involved with the "externals of war, victories, migrations, and political catastrophies."³ There is an "inner history," a "story of inner events, experiences, and singular guidance." It is a "history with God," which for von Rad means Heilsgeschichte.⁴ Israel only understood her history "as a road along which she travelled

¹Genesis, 32.

²Ibid., p. 31. Von Rad seems to be guided by K. Barth in his evaluation of Historie, Saga and Geschichte; CD, III, 1, 81f.

³Genesis, 32.

⁴Ibid. See also OTT, II, 418; "Antwort auf Conzelmanns Fragen," EvTH, 24 (1964), p. 392.

under Jahweh's protection," for her, "history consisted only of Jahweh's self-revelation by word and action."¹ Modern Historie can do nothing with the idea of election which is of such fundamental significance for the Old Testament concept of history.² It was inevitable that Historie would collide with this kind of understanding.³

Naturally when one asks about the background of the saga he encounters difficulty historically. But von Rad does not place much importance on the primary sense of the saga. The authentic element is not located in the original situation. There are certain exceptions where the primary sense is maintained (e.g., Josh. 10 and Jg. 4)⁴ but elsewhere the historical kernel falls into the background. This is because these traditions were subjected to reworking and reinterpreting at different times according to Israel's experiences, thus one story might contain the experiences of many generations. Beyond this, when these traditions were put into narrative form they could not maintain their original content.⁵ The patriarchal stories are an example of this. The voice in these stories is not one contemporary with the patriarchs, it is Israel's voice, and the God acting here is not the God of the patriarchs, it is Yahweh. If we look at the story of the Exodus, we see that the account of perhaps a mere escape has been glorified into an account in which all the tribes participate.⁶

The original intention of the story where Abraham is told to sacrifice Isaac was obviously a protest against child sacrifice, but later the

¹OTT, II, 418.

²EvTh, 24 (1964), p. 392.

³OTT, II, 418.

⁴OTT, II, 359, 421f.

⁵OTT, II, 421.

⁶OTT, I, 8, 13, 21; II, 422.

meaning of this incident was totally altered when it was linked to the promise made to the patriarchs. The story has to do with the realm of "faith's extremest experience," "forsakenness," a testing which Israel had to experience in her history with Yahweh.¹ The results of this experience is obvious in the story and this is where its "authentic" element lies.²

In the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel (Gen. 32:22f.), the story of Baalam (Num. 22-24), or the three stories dealing with the precarious situation of the ancestress of the race (Gen. 12:10ff.; 20:1ff.; 26:5ff.), there is obviously a historical core, however elusive it may be, but the experiences of Israel are also historical: "Jahweh turns the enemy's curse into blessing," and "he safeguards the promise in spite of all failure on the part of its recipient."³ What we have here is an experience of confidence Israel gained from her history. The story is an illustration of that confidence. The secondary experience is always the dominant element in these stories. Von Rad gives other examples, such as the story of Joseph and the story of the spies (which has its basis in an ancient Calabite saga). These stories preserve an old historical element in them, but they have been enriched by absorbing other historical experiences. Moreover some stories recount things that happened to a group but "they are removed from the realm of political history and projected into the wholly personal world of an individual".⁴ The experiences contained in these stories do not follow a

¹OTT, I, 174. See also I, 167ff., 173; "History and the Patriarchs," ET, 72 (1961) pp. 213ff.

²OTT, I, 173; II, 419.

³OTT, I, 110f.

⁴OTT, I, 110.

chronological order, but rather crisscross one another. "The event reported and the faith it expresses are no longer from the same period."¹ The traditions in saga or story form are shaped by a definite knowledge of the future, a future in which the full meaning of the event will come to light, i.e., its fulfillment. Thus the tradition is often set forth as having a "glory" that exceeds that of the actual historical experience. The promise made to the patriarchs directs all these events to a future beyond the narrated events. The manner in which the primary and secondary experiences are fused and the way in which the past is glorified by Israel's knowledge of the future make asking about the authentic element in the narratives appear less than profitable. It is doubtful if Israel was ever concerned with the question of authenticity. We do not have history at first hand here but only reflections of it.²

The figure and office of Moses in the history is subject to the same type of evaluation.³ In von Rad's opinion the uniform picture of Moses presented in the Hexateuch was achieved by a great deal of work on the traditions; Moses did not originally belong to them all. On the basis of the historical descriptions of the confessions and hymns, von Rad concludes that there is no evidence of Moses ever being the powerful leader pictured in the Hexateuch. Rather this picture of Moses is late; it has been formed out of theological considerations and reflects "claims made by certain institutions and groups, rivalries and questions of competency."⁴ The only place we may direct our historical questions about Moses and his functions is to the traditions, individual and

¹OTT, II, 422.

²OTT, II, 422ff., cf. I, 303.

³OTT, I, 13f., 289f.

⁴OTT, I, 290.

collected, where the figure of Moses was original. Any attempt to understand him as the founder of Israel's religion must be regarded as a rather hopeless task.¹

B. Time

Von Rad notes that there are two words for "time" in the Old Testament. The first word דָּבָר describes the "distant past or future." This term he dismisses for what he calls the "most important term" זֶמַן. It means "time", a "point in time," or "a period of time." He musters such examples as "a time of giving birth" (Micah 5:2 [3]), "a time for animals to be gathered together" (Gen. 29:7), and "a time when kings go forth to battle" (2 Sam. 11:1). One could debate whether it was "time" to undertake rebuilding the temple (Hag. 1:4). Ps. 1:3 notes that a tree bears fruit "in its time," and God gives food to his creatures "in due time" (Ps. 104:27). Each event has a place in the time order and is inconceivable without it.²

Israel's understanding of time was very different from our Western attitude. We conceive of time stretching into the past and future from the mid-point, our present day. In Israel, however, there was no abstract concept of absolute time. Time was recognized by content; it contained events. The most significant content of time according to Israel's idea was furnished by the cultic festival. The "rhythm of festal and non-festal times gave their own lives their rhythm in time."³ In fact the time of the cultic festival was the "one and only 'time.'"⁴ The festival provided the content; the festivals, not time, were the

¹OTT, I, 13f.

²OTT, II, 100.

³OTT, II, 102.

⁴OTT, II, 102.

absolutes. Von Rad implies, then, that since in early Israel the history was actualized by cultic celebration, this moment of cultic actualization was the time content of her history. Israel became absolutely present in this history. This cultic actualization continued for some time even after the dissociation of the events from cultic ties and their change to chronological actualization.¹

Because the historians of Israel presupposed that Yahweh worked with all Israel as a unity, Israel began to comprehend larger and larger areas of the history. Israel was always at work extending the period of time in the old canonical Heilsgeschichte. The Elohist kept the original periods of her history from the patriarchs to the conquest. The Yahwist and the Priestly writer covered the time-span from creation to the conquest. The Deuteronomistic history started with Moses, incorporated the period of the monarchy and concluded with the destruction of the nation in 587 B.C. Chronicles spanned the longest time, reaching from Adam to the post-exilic period. There was a "growing desire to survey a linear time-span and to come to a theological understanding of it."² This span was one which recognized history as a "road on which she travelled under God's guidance."³ This time-span alone can be called Israel's history, for God established the continuity of the different events in their time sequence.⁴

We may also describe this history as the succession of events in the scheme of promise and fulfillment.⁵ Thus we may call this way of

¹OTT, II, 102ff. ²OTT, II, 107. ³OTT, II, 107.

⁴OTT, II, 106; EvTh, 24 (1964), p. 391. ⁵OTT, II, 363, 383.

presenting longer time spans in narrative form "salvatio-historical."¹ This perspective comes to light especially in the Deuteronomistic histories.

II. Earliest Pictures of the Heilsgeschichte

A. The Old Credo

Seen from the perspective of von Rad's presuppositions the Hexateuch appears as the result of a periodic expansion of early confessional formulae. He describes the earliest of these testimonies as "historically determined."² This means they connect the name of Yahweh with some action in history. Von Rad identifies the statement of Yahweh bringing Israel out of Egypt as perhaps the earliest confessional formula. Other formulae include the designation of Yahweh as the God who called the patriarchs and who gave them the promise of the land. Summaries of the Heilsgeschichte were later brought together with these confessional formulae. The most important of these confessions of the Heilsgeschichte is Deuteronomy 26:5-9:

A wandering Aramean was my father; he went down with a few people into Egypt and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. But the Egyptians treated us harshly, they afflicted us, and laid hard toil upon us. Then we cried to Jahweh, the God of our fathers, and Jahweh heard us, and saw our afflictions, our toil, and oppression. And Jahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders, and brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.³

In this summary bruta facta are set down without reference to revelation by word, promises or teachings.⁴ Event has predominance over

¹OTT, II, 426.

²OTT, I, 121.

³OTT, I, 122.

⁴OTT, I, 122; II, 416.

word. Similar accounts of the history given in Josh. 24:2ff., and some of the Psalms, such as Ps. 136, concern themselves with the objective facts and confirm that the span of time from the patriarchs to the entry into the land is the time of the Heilsgeschichte "proper."¹

The entire Hexateuch is an expansion of this historical Credo. Narratives were connected to it, and its theological range was widened by adding traditional material. Here we are confronted with the work of the Yahwist and the Elohist. At a later time the Priestly Document also revealed its dependence on the confessional traditions. The most significant supplement to the Credo was the addition of the story of Creation and the primeval history, and the inclusion of the Sinai tradition which was of a different independent origin. This led to a detailed account of the history, arranged so that theological tensions stem from the sequence in which the material is presented. Theological conversation is effected indirectly by means of the traditional material, and in its final form the Hexateuch maintains a confessional form expressing something seen by a later Israel as "typical" for God's people.²

B. Covenant with David

The coming of David is of decisive importance to the faith of Israel. Work on the old Credo had just begun when this new element came into view. Yahweh was again acting in history. The history with God had not come to an end. He had chosen Zion and set up the throne of David. Israel realized the importance of David quite early, but a full realization did not come until her history with Yahweh had ended in the exile. At this time the Deuteronomistic history originates. It covers

¹OTT, I, 123.

²OTT, I, 123ff.

the time from the conquest to the exile. Yet this history is not simply a line extended from the first stage of Israel's history through to the second. It operates under different presuppositions. The gift of the land remains constant, but this age stands under judgment. The establishment and continuance of David's throne never expanded the old Credo, which had already become canonical, but this does not subtract from the event's importance. It is to be seen as a new saving act which Yahweh set up for Israel in its history.¹

The exile was without Heilsgeschichte and the Deuteronomistic history presents the reason for this "standstill" in the divine history. But whether the judgment that had fallen was final or temporary could only be answered on the basis of Yahweh's new acts in history. With Cyrus history began to move in the land of the exiles. Here "Israel's witness parts company with itself."² On the one hand, Neh. 9:6ff. and Judith 5:5ff. take up the history with God that had been brought to an end and establish a theological link with the pre-exilic history, a process especially evident in the Chronicler's history. But on the other hand, the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and especially Deutero-Isaiah, do away with the old and emphasize that God will do a new thing for Israel: a new covenant, a new Exodus, a new Moses; Yahweh's new work will surpass the old.³

The sequence of the pictures in the history with their various ideas of the progress of the Heilsgeschichte determines the way we must set forth the Old Testament witness. The best way to know where we should begin an Old Testament theology is by the phenomenon of prophecy.

¹OTT, I, 125, 306ff. ²OTT, I, 127. ³OTT, I, 127f.

If we treat the Old Testament systematically as religious ideas we will have to consider prophecy from the start, but it is questionable if this does justice to its message. Von Rad believes that the starting-point for the prophetic message is in the prophets' opinion that the earlier history was done away with, had come to an end, and that God would do something new. The prophets "seek to convince their contemporaries that for them the hitherto existing saving ordinances have lost their worth."¹ Salvation will come now by trusting that Yahweh will perform new saving acts in the future. This conviction of the prophets "places them basically outside the saving history as it had been understood up to then by Israel."² This fact makes it imperative that in an Old Testament theology prophecy be treated separately from the part dealing with the traditions in the Heilsgeschichte.

III. The Relation of the Old Credo (Heilsgeschichte) to History

Von Rad's basic contention is that the biblical picture of Israel's history does not represent a sequence of events in a natural course of history.³ It is a history constructed by faith, a Heilsgeschichte. In the Hexateuch the picture presented is Israel's developed confession, the earliest or simplest form of which is found in Deuteronomy 26:5-9.⁴ Von Rad gives this abbreviated picture of the history the designation of Heilsgeschichte without adequate explanation of why such a definition fits. As we mentioned earlier, this sequence of events does not represent historical memories of a path that led to

¹OTT, I, 128.

²OTT, I, 128.

³OTT, I, 3ff.

⁴OTT, I, 121f.

salvation but rather God's guidance is already acknowledged by the way the events were arranged in the confession.¹ This confessional picture of Israel's history was initially formed by the combination of various independent historical traditions originally belonging to separate and distinct tribes or tribal groups. Therefore the patriarchs were not directly related as the confessional picture presents them. Traditions connected with Jacob were chiefly attached to sanctuaries in central Palestine: Bethel, Shechem and Penuel. The traditions concerned with Abraham and Isaac were from the south, especially from Beersheba and Mamre.² The tribes bringing these individual traditions with them into Palestine arrived at different times; first, probably the Leah group, and then much later the Rachel group. One of the tribes that arrived in Palestine brought with them the account of their escape from Egypt. Around this tradition all other traditions within the confessional picture were arranged.³ These traditions from the story of the patriarchs (Jacob is the wandering Aramean) to the conquest have a basis in actual history although that basis may be obscure.⁴

Because these traditions were originally the property of different tribes or tribal groups they cannot be said to have belonged to "Israel," for according to von Rad's understanding historical investigation has shown that the name Israel did not attach to the tribes until the sacral alliance of the different tribes was achieved after they settled in Palestine.⁵ His hypothesis of how this came about can be briefly

¹OTT, I, 4f.

²OTT, I, 166.

³OTT, I, 8, 13, 121.

⁴OTT, I, 110f., 122, 173f.

⁵OTT, I, 6.

sketched. The tribal traditions were embodied in the cult where they provided the materials for cultic confessions and cultic invocations.¹ Following the opinions of Albrecht Alt and Martin Noth, von Rad holds that the cult practiced by the semi-nomadic pre-Israelite tribes was that of "the God of the ancestors." The gods worshipped by tribes connected with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob respectively were originally not identified in any way with Yahweh.² The worship of Yahweh only entered Palestine with the groups that made up the "house of Joseph." Joshua then forced this latter religion upon the tribes already settled in the land who worshipped the "gods of the ancestors."³ The acceptance of Yahweh by the rest of the tribes brought about the formation of the amphictyony; not a political alliance as such, but a sacral alliance. These tribes then became Israel in this sacral alliance which united in the worship of Yahweh and the care of the common sanctuary.⁴ The tribes probably made annual pilgrimages to the central sanctuary where the pure traditions of Yahweh were held. Gradually the Yahweh cult found entrance into other sanctuaries in the areas inhabited by other tribes.⁵ In this way Yahweh became identified with "the God of the ancestors." "The Fear of Isaac" (פֶּחַי יִצְחָק Gen. 31:53), "The Mighty One of Jacob" (אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב Gen. 49:24), both became designations of Yahweh.⁶ The separate traditions, already confessional in character,⁷ that must have been celebrated in isolation at various sanctuaries later became amalgamated to form a sequence of events essentially as

¹OTT, I, 121.

²OTT, I, 7f.

³OTT, I, 16, 7.

⁴OTT, I, 16f.

⁵OTT, I, 20, 21.

⁶OTT, I, 167.

⁷OTT, I, 107.

stated in the Credo of Deut. 26:5-9. The escape from Egypt was prefaced by the patriarchal history, then the events pertaining to the entrance into Canaan were added. Thus developed a "span of historical time;" Israel "began to think of a series of consecutive data" and realized "that her present was based on an earlier series of creative events."¹ By a summary confession of different divine acts as they were remembered in different places, there emerged a gradual building up of "linear historical" time span and so Israel came to this important concept.² But it is important to recognize that this time span is not a sequence of events in a normal time span. These events were originally unrelated to one another in a time sequence. Their relationship in time is the result of their confessional formulation. Von Rad refers to this time between the call of Abraham and the granting of the land the time of the Heilsgeschichte "proper."³

IV. Heilsgeschichte in the Hexateuch

A. Expansion of the Credo

Some time after the period of the Judges a number of factors occurred that were important for Israel's history: (a) She began to "emerge" from her "archaic piety" and take a different view of things; (b) The cultic influence weakened, resulting in traditions being detached from their cultic moorings;⁴ (c) Israel began to question if God was still with her;⁵ (d) People no longer experienced the things portrayed in the miracle stories;⁶ (e) Yahweh's leading out in the holy

¹OTT, II, 105. See also Genesis, 16; PH, 5. ²OTT, II, 106.

³OTT, I, 123. ⁴OTT, I, 36ff., 56; PH, 48, 68.

⁵OTT, I, 44; PH, 68ff. ⁶OTT, I, 50.

war, so that the people knew his direct intervention, no longer occurred.¹ This question of Yahweh's activity in history was a prime motivating factor for the Yahwist's work.² The Yahwist's generation were faced with the task of recognizing themselves as Israel.³

1. Incorporation of Sinai Tradition. The Yahwist collected the traditions that had been separated from their cultic connections. Following the Settlement tradition, i.e., the basic outline of the history contained in Deuteronomy 26:5-9 and similar texts, the Yahwist began writing his version of the history. Because there is no evidence of Sinai in the old summaries of the Heilsgeschichte, von Rad, on the basis of form criticism, claims to have discovered that the Sinai tradition has been secondarily inserted by the Yahwist into the traditions related to the Wanderings in the Wilderness. It was at a late date that this body of traditions was attached to the canonical picture of the Heilsgeschichte.⁴

The only evidence von Rad finds where the Sinai tradition appears as an event of the Heilsgeschichte is that given in Ps. 106, an exilic psalm, and the prayer in Neh. 9. The fusion of the Sinai tradition with the Settlement tradition was a purely literary process.⁵ Originally the Sinai tradition belonged to only one tribal group that underwent a significant religious experience at Sinai. Thus the amalgam of the traditions as we find them now originally had nothing to do with each other. The basic reference point for all the traditions in the Sinai narrative is

¹OTT, I, 50ff.; PH, 68ff.

²PH, 68ff., especially p. 73.

³OTT, I, 119.

⁴OTT, I, 187ff.; PH, 53f.

⁵PH, 54.

that "at Sinai Jahweh revealed to his people binding ordinances, on the basis of which life with its God was made possible."¹ The moving force behind all this coalescing of traditions of such diverse origin and location was the idea that these traditions narrated a history with God.²

As we have it, the Sinai pericope of JE does not contain a narrative sequence derived from historical events, but, according to von Rad, is "probably" the festal legend of the festival involving the renewal of the covenant which he locates at Shechem. Smaller units (Ex. 32-33), belonging to Sinai but not really related to the revelation there, were then added to the main block of traditions. Giving the commandments a second time (Ex. 34) was made necessary by breaking the Tables (32), this allowing the redactor of J and E to retain the Yahwist's account of the proclamation of the commandments which E's account made superfluous. J's proclamation of the commandments was very similar in meaning to E's, but the former in Ex. 34 is probably a later insertion made when the two sources were combined.³

According to form critical observations the Decalogue was the central and climactic element in the festival of the renewal of the covenant at Shechem. Von Rad believes he sees evidence for this in Deut. 31:10ff., but also cites a number of other passages from which he thinks he can reconstruct the liturgical sequence of this festival. The real basis of information for the sequence is the Sinai pericope of JE, which von Rad calls the "quondam festal legend" of this festival.

¹OTT, I, 188. See also I, 10; PH, 18, 53f.

²OTT, I, 188.

³OTT, I, 188f., 192; PH, 16ff.

When the commandments were proclaimed to Israel there was a "conveyance" of Israel to Yahweh. This von Rad evaluates as a concrete historical event, because in the cultic celebration the event became important for every generation.¹ The commandments are therefore to be considered "saving event," which is their proper theological significance.²

2. Development of the History of the Patriarchs. The old Credo, already containing a reference to the patriarchs in the person of Jacob, made the patriarchal history its starting point. The Yahwist added to this from two different bodies of tradition--one concerning Abraham, the other concerning Lot. Into the structure of the Jacob sagas were incorporated the sagas dealing with Isaac (Gen. 26:6-11). The Yahwist account of Jacob is a mixture of strands of traditions concerning Jacob and Esau, Jacob and Laban, cultic sagas and sagas which feature Jacob's children. The story of Joseph was already a complete independent work with close connections to Wisdom. The initial independence of these patriarchal figures is emphasized, for von Rad believes they all were located in different sanctuaries in Palestine where they absorbed many of the local Canaanite cultic sagas when they became connected with these sanctuaries. Abraham was linked with the tree sanctuary at Mamre where he became identified with the local cult saga, i.e., the experience with the three divine beings. Jacob was located in the shrines of the territory containing the Joseph tribes. After the assembly at Shechem, Jacob became identified with the cult saga at Bethel (Gen. 28:10ff.).³

¹OTT, I, 192. See also PH, 21ff., 26ff.

²OTT, I, 188, 192ff., 198; PH, 17ff.

³OTT, I, 171f.; PH, 54ff.; Genesis, 21, 25.

Another aspect of the particular treatment the Yahwist gave this material was the integration of the patriarchal history into the Settlement tradition. Although the promise was originally an element in the story of Abraham it is used again and again in the patriarchal stories up to and including the Joseph narratives to which it was originally unrelated. The promise thus became the "leitmotiv" in the Hexateuch. The promise of the land originally referred to a specific fulfillment in patriarchal times, but now is made to refer to the whole of Israel entering the land under Joshua. The relationship of the patriarchs to the land is now given a provisional character and their time appears as a time of promise, the fulfillment of which comes at a later time. The Yahwist thus changed the original purpose of the promise by making it refer to the later period of Joshua.¹

3. Addition of the Primeval History. The addition of the tradition from Abraham to Joshua to the old Credo made it necessary to provide a more adequate basis for the history than the old Credo could offer. This new basis was supplied by prefacing the account of Creation to the Heilsgeschichte. This located the beginning of the divine history at Creation, an accomplishment only made possible when Creation was seen as a saving work. Viewing Creation as a saving work is what determines its "proper theological relationship" to the Heilsgeschichte.² It took Israel a considerable length of time to see their proper relationship. Thus a soteriological meaning lies behind the Creation story of the Yahwist, although von Rad admits that the greatest evidence for this comes from

¹OTT, I, 169f., 297. See also PH, 62f.

²OTT, I, 136.

Deutero-Isaiah and certain psalms. Creation is now not considered by itself but is viewed as the beginning of the saving work in Israel and a part of the history which extends to the entry into Palestine. Because Creation is now perceived as the beginning of history she did not conceive of her environment in terms of myth; Creation was a work in history, in time. Because Israel is concerned with the reason for her existence, the meaning and purpose of the saving relationship between herself and Yahweh, Creation is to be considered part of Israelite aetiology.¹

a. Incursion and Spread of Sin. The Yahwist was deeply concerned with the growing problem of sin in the world.² Although the course he traces is to be considered as an "inner history" involving God and men, he portrays it as a sequence of actual events. The primeval history is composed of old stories, originally quite independent of each other, but which through theological handling show how the original relationship between man and God broke down.³ The Yahwist's purpose in his handling of the collected materials is to show what sin is--the cause of all the world's ills. But, he also portrays a growth of grace alongside the growth and consequences of sin. The stories of the Fall and the Flood show God's redemptive activity present even while he punishes, but the story of the Tower of Babel ends with judgment and despair.⁴

b. Yahweh and the Nations. The conclusion of the primeval history is found in the subject of Yahweh and the nations. The primeval

¹OTT, I, 136ff.; Genesis, 22f., 43f., 49; PH, 66, 131ff., 139.

²PH, 64.

³OTT, I, 154.

⁴OTT, I, 163f.; Genesis, 148ff.; PH, 65.

history extends from Creation to the nations. The subject of the nations is important because when Israel looked back at Creation in its historical form she saw herself as just one of the historical nations; therefore she could not remain attached to or derive her existence from myth. She would have whatever experiences she might with God in history.¹ At the beginning of the story of the Tower of Babel the nations are united and speak the same language, but their folly brings judgment. In other instances of the occurrence of sin there has been judgment, but it has always been associated with a word of salvation. God banished Adam and Eve from Eden, but he also clothed them, Cain was banished from the EDEN but was protected. But the Tower of Babel ends without grace. It causes one to ask if there will be further relations between God and the nations. The Yahwist answers this by linking the primeval history with the Heilsgeschichte. Now we are confronted with the call of Abraham by whom Yahweh intends to bless all the families of the earth. Salvation has been offered once more. By the joining of these two histories the entire Heilsgeschichte is to be understood with reference to the problematic relationship between Yahweh and the nations.² Genesis 12:1-9 has been created ad hoc by the Yahwist in order to make the transition from the primeval history to the actual Abraham narratives.³

4. Movement of the Heilsgeschichte. The history of the patriarchs constitutes the initial element in the confessional summary of the canonical Heilsgeschichte. The promise of the land was of major importance in the covenant made with them. Originally the promise was

¹OTT, I, 162; PH, 63ff.; Genesis, 22f.

²OTT, I, 163f.; Genesis, 50, 148ff.

³Genesis, 158.

made to the worshippers of the ancestral God and an immediate fulfillment was intended. The promise, however, passed through a long history and was eventually incorporated by the Yahwist into his work. Though the promise did not initially refer to a move out of the land and a later return under Joshua¹ the Yahwist gave it such a reference. The Yahwist employed a "twofold promise," land and children, "as a word of God which set in motion the whole of the saving history down to the conquest under Joshua."² The history of the patriarchs serves to bring Israel to an understanding of how Yahweh brought her into being. The Yahwist has taken the promises originally referring to the God of the fathers and spiritualized them. They no longer serve as material for cult and ritual, now they serve to illuminate Yahweh's control of history by his beneficial or destructive acts. In the story of Abraham the Yahwist is concerned with both blessings and, to a lesser degree, curses. The promise of innumerable descendants made to Abraham goes beyond Abraham and his seed. Now God brings salvation and judgment into history, and the attitude man adopts towards the work God will accomplish in history will determine his salvation or judgment.³

In the Yahwist's exposition there has been a new interpretation of the promise on the basis of a different fulfillment.⁴ But on the basis of Judges 1, which von Rad judges to be the conclusion of the Yahwist's work, he also ventures to assert that this account of the fulfillment of the promise is not a description of what happened in the

¹OTT, I, 133f.

²OTT, I, 170.

³OTT, I, 167ff.; Genesis, 155ff., 161.

⁴OTT, I, 118f., 134, 168, II, 425; EOTH, p. 28.

time of Joshua, but rather in the time of David. Indeed the way the Yahwist regarded the ordering and directing of history is brought about by David and Israel's experiences under him as king and has a certain affinity to the account of Solomon's accession to David's throne (2 Sam. 7, 9-20; 1 Kings 1-2). This is particularly true regarding the extension of the old territorial claims made in the period of the Judges. "This is what the Yahwist's restrained mode of presentation actually invites us to read between the lines at the end of the work."¹ The promise had been only partially fulfilled in Joshua's time, but now Yahweh had kept his promise even though it was in David's day.² Thus the time between promise and fulfillment is not that transpiring between the patriarchs and Joshua but between the patriarchs and David.

5. Intention of the Yahwist. The Yahwist's intention emerges when the question of Yahweh's presence with Israel arose, when she perceived that things were not occurring as they had earlier in the history. The Yahwist sets out to create a new perspective for the faith by directing it to the immediate historical situation. Although in a different time and a different way, Yahweh had kept his promise; the history with Yahweh was still moving on. Even though in most of the Yahwist's stories the direct intervention of Yahweh is visible, there are others that dispense with this expression of God's guidance and these are the stories von Rad feels are more determinative for the Yahwist's work. Yahweh works in history by unseen guidance. The stories that offer us this understanding of the Yahwist are approximately

¹PH, 73.

²PH, 71ff.

contemporary with him. One of these stories that von Rad judges to be portraying God's hidden guidance, or guidance of the heart, is the "wooing of Rebecca," where God's guidance is evident without any miracle involved in the giving of the sign. Another such indicator is Laban's acknowledgment of God's hidden guidance.¹ Thus von Rad states, the work of the Yahwist must be understood in light of two factors: (a) "the new-found recognition of the hidden activity of God in history," and (b) "the relevance of the ancient territorial claims to the time of David and later."²

B. The Elohist

After the Yahwist we come chronologically into contact with E. The Elohist begins his work with the history of the patriarchs rather than the primeval history. In doing this he remains closer to the canonical form of the Heilsgeschichte than the Yahwist.³ J and E are closely coordinated and any differences between the two sources should be considered of less importance than the fact that both contain a twofold promise of land and posterity, and both make a future orientation of the promise to patriarchs.⁴ E, like J, depicts a history "set in motion" by the promise to the patriarchs that continued on to the conquest of the land.⁵ It is important to remember that the Elohist built on the Yahwist's work⁶ and that JE depicts both the hidden guidance of Yahweh as well as the experience of the one who received the promise.⁷

¹OTT, I, 51. See also I, 175; PH, 72 ff. ²PH, 73.

³OTT, I, 124; Genesis, 25.

⁴OTT, I, 168f.

⁵EOTH, p. 28; OTT, I, 167f. ⁶OTT, I, 119. ⁷OTT, I, 171.

C. Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is a program for the cult and represents an attempt to define the will of God for a particular age far removed from the setting in the book. This generation was heir to a weakened faith, due to both debilitating influences and the distance that separated the original generation from this one. The framework of the book reflects the liturgical movement of the festival of the renewal of the covenant located at Shechem. The movement of this festival gave unity to the form and arrangement of the book as it progresses through "paraenesis, commandments, pledging to the covenant, proclamation of blessing and cursing."¹

The form of the book is a "farewell sermon of Moses," but of course the picture given that these are Moses' words to Israel when they arrived in the land of Moab is fictional. The actual situation is the preaching of the Levites, in all probability during the late period of the Monarchy. The Israel of this time is depicted as the Israel of Moses' time. One of the characteristics of Israel's cult was that it gave Israel the understanding that she had been a participant in the past saving events. But this would mean that the people of the later monarchical period who were already in the land, understood themselves as still between her initial election and its completion, between promise and fulfillment. It is in the way von Rad thinks of the nature and purpose of Deuteronomy that brings him to perceive that he has found evidence of every generation that wished to understand themselves as Israel having to conceive of itself as

¹OTT, I, 220. See also SD, 70ff.

analogous to the Israel of Moses' time. Past and present are indistinguishable.¹

The book of Deuteronomy is made up of a variety of subjects. Many different traditions have been unified in these sermons, and then the entire agglomeration is fitted into the schematized picture of Israel in the wilderness. The picture is presented as if it were an organic unity, but it is only the result of harmonizing independent traditions. The term torah serves as a most important element in the unification of the traditions because Yahweh, who is one, revealed himself in one revelation--the torah of Deuteronomy. The cult also achieved unification and centralization by the concept of the oneness of Yahweh. The program of Deuteronomy offers salvation on the same basis as it was offered at Sinai, and thus when we read the emphasis on "today" we are to understand that the time of Moses and that of Deuteronomy are to be considered together.²

D. The Priestly Document

The Priestly Document is an actual historical work, but its concern is not the same as that of JE. God's hidden guidance and the reaction to it are the subjects of JE, but the interest of P is "the growth of particular cultic institutions out of the history."³ It concerns itself with the ordinances of Yahweh revealed for Israel's salvation during the history and establishes their legitimacy by showing their location in the Heilsgeschichte. All the priestly

¹OTT, I, 221ff.; Deuteronomy, 28.

²OTT, I, 225ff., 231. Deuteronomy, 15, 28f.

³OTT, I, 233.

institutions and regulations are revealed in P's history in such a way that every generation experienced God's redemptive activity.¹

The theological scheme P produces locates the beginning of the history of the cultic institutions at Creation. His aim is to show that the cult is the actual goal of the creation and evolution of the world. The difference between JE, D and P is that JE and D see God's justice announced at Sinai while P sees Sinai as the place where Yahweh established the cult.²

The picture the Priestly Document presents of cultic objects (e.g., the Tent, the Ark and the glory of God) also reveals how traditions were handled. The Tent was a cultic object originally existing independently of the Ark. These two objects originally belonged to different groups, but now appear together as a coalescence of traditions. They represent two different theologies. Associated with the Tent is a "theology of manifestation," with the Ark a theology of "presence." Von Rad considers the Tabernacle of the Priestly Document a combination of Tent and Ark. Although the date of the fusion is not known, the union was accomplished by a revival of the theology associated with the Tent. The Tent was thought of as the only place Israel could meet with Yahweh. P depicts the glory of Yahweh over the Tent, and while the importance of the Ark is retained, it is no longer Yahweh's throne.³

¹OTT, I, 78, 232; PH, 76f.

²OTT, I, 234; PH, 76f., 155. "P, in fact, takes an overall view of history, in which God's redemptive activity is revealed at every stage. This means, however, that the priestly writer must accept fully, in his own way, that decisive recognition of the purposeful activity of God in history which characterises J, as well as J's arrangement of the material" (PH, 77).

³OTT, I, 235ff.; PH, 103-106.

The Priestly Document depicts history as a series of revelations made to Noah, Abraham and Moses. To Abraham is made the promise of the land, also the promise of a special relationship between God and Abraham's descendants, a contribution which is specifically made by P. The history is then directed towards the events at Sinai, where the special relationship will be realized through the giving of the commandments and the founding of the proper cult, something Israel did not have.¹ In order to create this pre-Sinai cultless situation P deleted the evidence of sacrifices from Abraham to Sinai and in many ways distorted the material he had at hand. The distortion and deletion of materials, however, gave sharper definition to the new era beginning with Sinai, as well as the new idea that Yahweh revealed himself in the **כבוד יהוה**. The **כבוד יהוה** is given the appearance of an ancient tradition, although it is attributable to P. The appearance of Yahweh's glory for the first time over the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34f.) was a sign that all the promises made to the patriarchs, relative to his being their God, were fulfilled (Gen. 17:7).²

In considering the subject of the cultic personnel and materials, we should recognize that P is a historical work and not merely a theology written as if it were history. The interest P has in the cultic material is not particularly great; the concern is limited to the manner in which the rites and offices were legitimated. Some of the cultic elements, although the number is not great, are shown to have originated from the Heilsgeschichte at God's command. The cultic regulations are actually the outgrowth of a long history, and this accounts for the complex and systematized functions and rights of the respective personnel. In the

¹OTT, I, 169, cf. 134.

²OTT, I, 240f.

course of the priestly manipulation of traditional material, the priests are attributed with functions that originally applied elsewhere. For instance, parts of the sacrificial service originally executed by the laity were transferred to the priests.¹ The document also explains how certain families received their appointments to the priesthood from Yahweh, although the fact is that in the case of the Zadokites the appointment of their ancestors was made by Solomon. The priesthood was hereditary however, and P only recognizes the Aaronites. The fall of the monarchy meant that certain functions performed by the king passed to the high priest. This influenced the creation of the picture that the priests perform their duties independent of the monarch.²

Criticism has shown that in its present form P cannot be understood historically without considering it in the light of the pre-exilic cult. Much of the description in P was given its impetus by the sanctuary in Jerusalem and the centralization of the cult by Josiah. The former provided the stimulus for elaboration of the cult, the latter for the separation of priests from the Levites. The act of centralization also gave a superior status to the Jerusalem priests and made possible the appointment of the Levites to their duties because they belonged to Yahweh as a substitute for the firstborn of Israel. The depiction of the Levites being stationed directly around the tabernacle as a protecting and atoning force is also rooted here. But these theories do not give an actual historical description but are products of reflection at a later time in an attempt to give a theological explanation to the actual conditions in P's day.³

¹OTT, I, 242ff.

²OTT, I, 249.

³OTT, I, 250.

E. The Deuteronomic Editor of the Book of Joshua

The last saving act in the Heilsgeschichte concerns the granting of the land of Canaan. The major sources all end with this subject. Theological considerations over how Yahweh had given them the land produced complications over how they possessed the land.¹ The entry into the land was generally peaceful; the wars and conflict are the product of a later description based on the relationships between the foreign element and the natives in the land. The idea that Israel had a title to the land and the resulting conclusion that they could not live peacefully alongside the local inhabitants is the creation of a later experience, as is the extention of the strict "either-or" choice Israel had to make in relation to every aspect of life. Israel actually only became aware of this with the Deuteronomic theology.²

The Book of Joshua makes it appear that all the tribes entered Canaan at the same time under Joshua's leadership, but this was not the case. The picture, fashioned by faith, represents the historian's desire to show that Yahweh deals with Israel as a unit. However, von Rad affirms that we should not think of the picture as unhistorical even though it does not have its center in itself. It was written to tell

¹OTT, I, 296ff. Noth has made the literary analysis of the Book of Joshua uncertain by denying the occurrence of J, E, P (OTT, I, 298). Therefore von Rad confines himself to using older and later material he finds there, instead of the picture given in the source documents. It is interesting to note that although von Rad acknowledges that J, E, and P may possibly be absent from Joshua we are told that the idea of promise employed by the Yahwist forces us to relate the conquest of the land under Joshua to this promise. It is clearly the theological trend of the Deuteronomist that guides all he says about the way the tradition of the Granting of the Land of Canaan took shape.

²OTT, I, 299.

the reader about how Yahweh led his people and got glory for himself. Unification of disconnected events is achieved by the writer's concern to present Yahweh working with Israel as a unity in the Heilsgeschichte. The material has been mastered by faith, and it is the "mighty zeal for and glorification of the acts of Jahweh" that determine and support this later historical observation.¹

Commenting on the differences in the accounts of the allotment of land and the fact that their dates differ from before the formation of the state to the time of Jushua, von Rad affirms that we should not be too judgmental towards the historiographer because of his particular historical views or because he did not discriminate between early and late accounts of the entry into the land. Positivistic attitudes cannot properly assess the value of his accounts. The Deuteronomist desires to show that Yahweh works with Israel in history as a unity. This perspective made it possible to see Yahweh's action with Israel both before and after the entry into the land, and made it possible for a man living in the exilic period to combine sources from early and late periods without raising the question of its propriety. They were all documents dealing with Yahweh's "one and the same will to control history."²

The statements about the granting of the land are not just memories, but declarations of faith which every age had to reformulate for itself. The Deuteronomist, who edited this material and fused the diverse elements together in the Book of Joshua, shows us his theological conception of things which allows him to give descriptions, whether of

¹OTT, I, 302.

²OTT, I, 303. See also PH, 97.

the land, conquest etc., that exceed reality. This is also evident in his judgment that in possessing the land Israel was given "rest." We are to understand by this that Yahweh's promise was fulfilled and that his words had not come to nothing. "Here the Deuteronomist is engaged in a very comprehensive reflexion on the relationship between promise and fulfilment."¹ The promise had been fulfilled. Therefore, any new "impulse" in the Heilsgeschichte could only begin from Yahweh's "addressing Israel anew." But this "impulse" is still future.

F. Summary

The following points are significant for a general understanding of von Rad's ideas of history and time, and his understanding of Heilsgeschichte in the Hexateuch:

1. Evaluating Israel's understanding of history and time by modern standards distorts its message and intention.
2. Israel's history is a history with God, one initiated and moved by God's word.
3. The picture of the history presented is achieved by the combination and interpretation of traditions, during which the importance of the original event or situation recedes and the secondary experience becomes primary.
4. The basic sequence of events in the old Credo (Heilsgeschichte) does not represent an actual course of history, but is the product of a confessional activity in a central sanctuary. This has

¹OTT, I, 304. Von Rad notes that God also gave rest to Joshua, David and Solomon. He sees here a reluctance on the part of someone who knew the deuteronomic saying about rest to apply this idea to any one stage of the history to which he looked back. Von Rad asks: "who shall say that his hesitation was not justified?" (PH, 97).

important consequences for Israel's idea of time, for the time content of this sequence is determined by the moment of cultic actualization. Yet, eventually Israel came to her understanding of linear time by means of this sequence.

5. The old Credo was expanded by the Yahwist, externally by pushing the time factor back by prefacing the Heilsgeschichte with the primeval history, and internally by incorporating the Sinai tradition. This history is given its movement by the promise made to Abraham which functions as a word of God and moves the history on to a fulfillment, a fulfillment which took place not in the time of the patriarchs, the original situation, but in the time of those who entered the land under Joshua. However, on the basis of an earlier essay of von Rad's where Joshua 1 is said to be the end of the Yahwist's work, neither the event posited as fulfillment, i.e., the entry under Joshua, nor the time designated as having transpired to the time of the conquest are the actual historical elements represented. They refer to the time of David. Heilsgeschichte has become an expression of Yahweh's hidden guidance in history instead of an expression of direct intervention as had formerly been the case. The Elohist's work expresses itself in a similar way.
6. The Priestly Document portrays a real history with the same scope as that of the earlier historians. He manipulates the traditions and schematizes the history to achieve his aims of showing how the ordinances were products of the Heilsgeschichte. He sees the promises made to the patriarchs fulfilled when Yahweh's glory appeared over the Tabernacle.

7. The Deuteronomist's editing of the Book of Joshua is a demonstration of how documents from the period of the Judges were coordinated with those from the time of Josiah to show how Yahweh works with all Israel. This process produces conditions in the picture of the earlier period that never actually existed. The time between promise and fulfillment here is not between the time of the patriarchs and the fulfillment of the promise under Joshua, but the time between the patriarchs and the expansion of the empire by Josiah.

V. History Writing on the Basis of the David-Zion Traditions¹

A. The Deuteronomistic Histories

After von Rad's work on the Hexateuch, in which he showed it to be a layer-upon-layer development of Israel's basic confession of the historical acts from the call of the patriarchs through the granting of the land, he explains that Yahweh had "further dealings with Israel."² This statement is supported by the following facts: (a) the history of the people settled in the land had become a history with Yahweh; (b) the data which this people considered to be of utmost importance were never taken up into the confession leading to an expansion, or made into a confession itself--for example the guarantee and the continuance of David's throne, along with other important data, were never made

¹Because of von Rad's traditio-historical approach he is able to treat the Deuteronomistic histories, the work of the Chronicler, which is built on the work of the Deuteronomist, and the royal psalms under the heading of "Israel's Anointed."

²OTT, I, 306.

into a confession similar to the one composed of the events from the call of the patriarchs through the entry into the land; (c) the Deuteronomist is aware that with Joshua "an important epoch of Jahweh's saving action with Israel was brought to its conclusion."¹ Josh. 24:31 and Jg. 2:7 show that after Joshua "'Jahweh's work' with Israel--notice the singular--begins to be past history."² Von Rad feels that a finding of traditio-historical criticism confirms this, showing something quite different from what one finds in the Hexateuch. The basis of his conviction is that large collections of traditions like those of the Sinai pericope are not evident. The account does not depend on the arrangement of a cultic confession as before but is relative to the history of tradition, developed in a different way. This account is progressively concerned with actual historical documents and real history writing. Certainly one can still see the fusing of traditions and redactions which result in new interpretations, but the account of the history is now "incomparably more spirited, unilinear, and lucid."³

In the Book of Judges we are offered a picture of something new in the history, i.e., Yahweh's protection in war. This appeared in the charisma that came to one of the Israelites. Connected with this are the stories of the holy wars which are artistic literary creations of a later time. The Deuteronomistic historical work placed the stories of the Judges in their present theological context, and we are to understand them in this context even though we might be interested in their original forms. Considerable change took place

¹OTT, I, 306.

²OTT, I, 306.

³OTT, I, 307.

in the perspective of these stories from the time of their origin until they were incorporated into the Deuteronomistic history because the monarchy had become dominant in forming perspective. The Davidic dynasty was a "new thing" that Yahweh had established in history, stimulating the production of both theology and literature. Therefore, "the Davidic dynasty is, after the Hexateuch, the next great focal point of tradition."¹ It is from this perspective that the Deuteronomist writes Israel's history from the conquest right up to the destruction of Israel and Judah. To understand this history it will then be necessary to begin with the theological view held of the dynasty. But we are immediately confronted by the fact that there are various views of this subject, so von Rad proposes that we must understand the bodies of tradition from "within," that is, from the perspective of their oldest parts trace the growth of the traditions. This involves following this development both backwards and forwards. It is to be noted that only with the Deuteronomist does theological reflection go back to encompass the entire period of the Judges and bring it together with the monarchy.²

1. The covenant with David in the history. The rise of the Davidic dynasty is depicted not mythically, but in the light of history which shows the political phases associated with it. The Deuteronomic history works with an already idealized picture. There are three accounts of David's beginnings: 1 Sam. 16:14ff.; 1 Sam. 17:1ff.; and 1 Sam. 16:1ff. Only the latter knows of a religious call and describes David as being elected and anointed as a youth. According

¹OTT, I, 308.

²OTT, I, 308.

to von Rad this is the latest account and is historically (historisch) erroneous.¹

It was later, after David had moved to the palace in Jerusalem, that his throne was endorsed and guaranteed by Yahweh in the Nathan prophecy (2 Sam. 7:1). This was of decisive importance. The Nathan prophecy is concerned with the motif of God not allowing David to build him a house, but instead God building a house for David. This statement is composed of different ideas. One idea deals with extending the promise to the posterity of David, while another seeks to extend the prophecy to "all" who came forth from David. Later there was the attempt to extend it so that it included the entire people of God. The Nathan prophecy serves only as a "torso" for later expansions. In all probability the version we read could only have come into being no earlier than the time of Solomon, though it contains portions of the earliest prophetic formulations.²

Von Rad believes that the "Last Words of David" (2 Sam. 23:1ff.) are more ancient than the Nathan prophecy. They mention the everlasting covenant God made with David (ברית עולם) an idea we are led to expect already in 2 Sam. 7. The term designates a new status in the relationship between the two parties involved. In this connection we are to consider Yahweh's adoption of the king as his son. Only at a later time did the implications of this new relationship come to light. The promise in Ps. 132:17 was the reason for the Nathan prophecy becoming such a significant creative force in the tradition.

¹OTT, I, 309; TAT,⁶ I, 321.

²OTT, I, 309. The formulation of this motif in the Nathan prophecy is Wellhausen's (OTT, I, 310).

This promise was in the minds of the people and was never forgotten. It was reinterpreted from age to age, making it relevant for the present day. The origin and legitimation of all messianic expectations are rooted in this prophecy.¹

The transmission of the Nathan prophecy was not made in the interest of the prophecy itself, rather interest lies in it as "a completely newly-emergent coefficient in the history which Jahweh willed."² 2 Sam. 7 was once an independent story, but was very early incorporated into the Succession Document giving the covenant with David a wider historical context. This brought about a change in perspective, because the interest of the account is no longer solely in the "historical facts" (geschichtlichen Faktizität), but in their "effects" and "how they worked out in a chain of serious internal political struggles."³ It is our task therefore to understand the basic features of the Succession Document.

The most important characteristic of this document is the tension built into it. The first statement is that the queen is barren, and immediately thereafter follows the Nathan prophecy. The questions of the queen's barrenness and the successor bring about the tension. The tension continues until Nathan and Bathsheba are successful in seeing that Solomon will sit on the throne after David.⁴

While this historical picture allows us to see the actions of men and the complications of politics, von Rad would also have us

¹OTT, I, 310f.

²OTT, I, 311.

³OTT, I, 312; TAT,⁶ I, 324.

⁴OTT, I, 311f.; PH, 176ff., 189ff.

realize something else the historian is interested in bringing out: the "fulfilment of destinies."¹ In this presentation there seem to be two intentions; one is that judgment is associated with words of the prophet, and the other that the judgment of God comes secretly, in the train of events in history. The historian also wishes to portray God's relation to this history, and therefore shows how God favors Solomon but is displeased with David. He makes no attempt to justify this statement. In another instance, the advice of Achitophel is brought to naught because Yahweh had ordained that it should work against Absalom. The intent of the historian here is to show that Yahweh intervened when he heard the prayer of his anointed and avoided the threat to the throne.²

In this view of history we find a "completely new concept of Jahweh's action."³ While formerly we witnessed Yahweh working in history through miracles, charismatic leaders, the holy war, his work linked primarily to sacral institutions, now that type of control in history is gone. Divine action does not interact with men's history. There is no break in the cause and effect sequence of events. All the forces are of men alone. The historian's idea of divine guidance is completely different. Yahweh is in control of all that happens, only this guidance is hidden to the eye. The controlling force of this history works in the human heart. All the impulses emanating from the heart are made to work within God's plan for history.⁴

¹OTT, I, 314. See also PH, 177, 194ff.

²OTT, I, 314f.; PH, 199ff. ³OTT, I, 315.

⁴OTT, I, 315f.; PH, 201.

From this we may evaluate the Succession Document as "theological historiography." It is concerned with more than just Yahweh's general guidance, it is involved with the messianic problem. The historian wants to show how the Nathan prophecy was fulfilled but at the same time to let the reader see that the promise was fulfilled in a way that was not expected.¹

Another example of the unexpected is in 2 Sam. 24., which deals with David's numbering of Israel and the consequences that ensued. David was not punished in the ordinary way because he was the anointed. He submitted himself to Yahweh and chose the punishment of pestilence thought to come directly from God. This was an unexpected choice, but by casting himself on God's mercy he avoided the disaster.² Von Rad holds that the story serves to explain why there was an altar of Yahweh in a Canaanite city formerly occupied by the Jebusites. But beyond that we must understand the story from its end, as relating a saving event. If this sequence of events resulted in revealing salvation, then Yahweh was the moving force behind them, and David's transgression had no part in it.³

¹OTT, I, 316.

²OTT, I, 317f.

³OTT, I, 318. At this point von Rad discusses the empire and office of the anointed in the royal psalms. Ideas about the anointed and his empire in the royal psalms are to be regarded as "prophetic exegeses of the Nathan prophecy" (OTT, I, 321). The royal psalms must be understood in light of a fact Yahweh established. They make the promises to David relevant for the present day. The superlative description (Ps. 110; 72:8, 11) make it clear that the royal psalms give us more information about the "prophetic prototype" than they do about the actual historical description of a figure. The *doxa*, which they attribute to the monarchy, was given by Yahweh once and was constant. The situation with the anointed's office and empire are similar. The anointed rules vast regions. Many things said about him refer to function rather than to describing the king, himself. The encompassing

2. Saul. In the traditional material there is scarcely anything said about Saul for his own sake or about his relationship to Yahweh. The reasons for this are theological. Certainly Saul was at one time important enough to become the object of poetry; but for the faith, interest attaches to him as the one who failed, who was forsaken by God and as the one who merely preceded David, the one the stories look forward to. Yet Saul was called by Yahweh for a specific saving purpose.¹

The accounts of Saul are found in two different versions. The differences are constituted both by historical circumstances and the way the event was understood theologically. In the earlier version Yahweh directed Samuel to anoint Saul king because of a pressing political situation. The anointing was carried out, but Saul did not receive the charisma until he responded to the crucial situation of the city of Jabesh in Gilead. The army, seeing the manifestation of Yahweh's spirit in Saul which resulted in victory over the Ammonites, elected him king (1 Sam. 9:1-10; 16:10, 27b-11:15). In the later version the people take the initiative, to Samuel's dismay, but he concedes and Saul is elected king at Mizpah. Both accounts express the same thing from different angles. The older account emphasizes Yahweh's will unfolding in history. The later account looks at the monarchy from the

language used to describe his office goes beyond historical realities. The king's relation to the divine law was never what it is described to be, nor did he ever function in a priestly capacity. The king's office has absorbed other functions in the course of the tradition. This made it possible to achieve legitimation from ancient traditions. Israel also attributed an ancient charismatic function to the king. It should be remembered that in Moses' time and the period of the Judges authorization could not be separated from the giving of Yahweh's spirit.

¹OTT, I, 324f.

perspective of what it was like during its history, and sees it as an institution which gave into the demands of the people. Its fate was determined by exclusive attention to the affairs of state; Israel was no different from other nations because of her kings (1 Sam. 8:5, 20). She had thrown off the understanding that God ruled over her (1 Sam. 8:7; 12:12). Theocracy provides the perspective for both accounts. The older view is favorable to the anointed being the instrument of Yahweh in his control of history, but the later account shows Yahweh's stand against the political demands of the people dominating the anointed. The later account must be evaluated from the viewpoint of its composition, i.e., after 722 and 587. It would obviously see things differently from the earlier report. The situations contributing to the fall of the monarchy were still in the future when the early account was composed, but because a later historian provided his theological impression of the stories, there is definitely a negative view of Saul because of his attitude towards David. These stories of Saul are thus told in the interest of David, the one who will come. If this future element had not been the real subject of the stories they would not even be extant now. Saul created no traditions nor does he appear as a type of anything to come. Beyond what the Deuteronomist tells us, the Chronicler adds only the note about his death. The portrayal of the history in Ps. 78 and the hymn in Ecclesiasticus 44ff. have excluded him entirely from the Heilsgeschichte.¹

3. The Judges. The Deuteronomistic account of the period of the Judges confronts us most forcibly with the theology of history which

¹OTT, I, 325ff.

provides the basis for the historian's judgments. There is much old material in the work but interest does not center in the old documents, rather this historical work is attempting "to disclose that divine meaning of the events of the era which had in the interval become more clearly discernible."¹ One must be given theological insight in order to understand this period in the Heilsgeschichte. The Deuteronomist adopts a theological scheme in the light of which he combines old material and interprets it. This produces a rather disjointed picture in the Book of Joshua. While the early stories are specific and unique and reflect the earlier period, the theological framework into which they are placed gives them the appearance of events in a constantly recurring pattern. This is due to the way the Deuteronomist reflects on these events.²

One cannot say that there is no reflection on the facts involved in the old stories. According to von Rad, there are definite ideas expressed about the early events, only "this communicates itself to the reader indirectly through the course of events itself as they are given," but the Deuteronomist approaches the reader "with his reflexions in expansive comments."³ The stories go so far in depicting the total sufficiency of Yahweh that they dispense with the idea of human involvement in the saving action. Actually, however, the men of Israel also fought in the holy wars. These stories, while glorifying the acts of Yahweh, depict a steady decline in the charismatic element and also project a pessimistic attitude towards the charismatic leaders. They all seem to move from the manifestation of the kerygma to

¹OTT, I, 328.

²OTT, I, 327f.

³OTT, I, 328.

committing sin. There appears to be a looking into the future for one who can be a deliverer at all times.¹

The Deuteronomistic historian makes these leaders appear to judge the whole of Israel for a considerable time when actually the old stories reveal that they were limited to various regions. The chronology is schematized so that a cycle of deliverance and punishment appears. This rhythm in her history operates according to divine law. In this historical work we are informed about something that could not be seen in the traditional material, yet von Rad asks us to try to understand its theological concern with history just as it is presented.²

The Deuteronomist's concern goes beyond the scope of the narrative complexes. He wishes to demonstrate how God views Israel's history as a totality and as a unity. This is the purpose behind his schematizations. Another concern of the Deuteronomist is to show how the nature religions threatened Israel. When Israel yielded to their influence she was punished, but God also raised up deliverers. The presentation pictures all Israel fluctuating between Baal worship and allegiance to Yahweh, but this is not possible historically. The Deuteronomist has schematized things so that it appears as if every generation of Israel went through the same historical experiences of Yahweh's judgment and salvation. Again it is the conception of the unity of Israel and the way God works with all Israel that dominates this account.³

¹OTT, I, 329. See also VuF (1947-48), pp. 191, n. 48. "This catenna of narrative is not by any means a history; it is a conglomeration of very diverse sagas" (PH, 172).

²OTT, I, 329ff.

³OTT, I, 331f.

The lateness of the Deuteronomistic picture of the Judges is illustrated by the fact that only in the light of the monarchy could the idea of men ruling over Israel for life and leading out in war have arisen. The monarchy could not have been patterned after the Judges because the Deuteronomist takes a judgmental view of the monarchy while approving of the Judges and the Amphictyony. In this he shows that he is following the ideas contained in Deuteronomy.¹

4. The Deuteronomist's Theology of History (The Books of Kings).

Although the Books of Kings display the same hand in their composition as the Book of Judges, the two eras in Israel's history are portrayed and evaluated from different theological perspectives. They are not linked together in this theology of history. Apart from this separation the literary technique employed is identical to that applied to the Book of Judges. The old material is given in the form it was received; individual parts are connected to express the meaning the historian had in mind. The resulting description of the king's reign is then fitted into a typical framework, the dominant theological characteristic of which is the judgment given the kings. There are places where the Deuteronomist compared his own narratives, as well as places where his radical reflection on the history is evident, e.g., 2 Kgs. 17:7ff., the conclusion of his account of the northern kingdom. The formal difference between the Book of Judges and the Books of Kings is that for the period of the monarchy the Deuteronomist had more documents with which to work.²

¹OTT, I, 322.

²OTT, I, 334f.

This Deuteronomistic history was written during the exile. The late period in which he lived contributed to the different spiritual attitude he has from that which produced the Succession Document. The Deuteronomistic theology of history is committed to standards of judgment found mainly in Deuteronomy. By them he judges what transpired in the past. This is evident in the case of his opinion of those who did not conform to the demand of centralized worship. Even those who lived before this command became normative were judged by it. Because the Deuteronomistic theology of history expresses this view the kings of Judah and Israel are judged on the basis of their recognition of the temple at Jerusalem as the only legitimate place of worship, or whether they worshipped at the other shrines. Kings who did the latter are condemned as having committed the sin of Jeroboam.¹

Von Rad admits that we may question the justice of these judgments, but he justifies them on the basis that the standards adapted by Deuteronomy are quite ancient and probably are to be seen in light of the time of the Amphictyony when Israel had "something like" a centralized place of worship, a central sanctuary. The principal thing we must recognize about these judgments, however, is that they apply to the king's cultic decision, not to his political and religious accomplishments. This historical work judges everything from a theological perspective, and because of the confessional situation of worship only at the temple in Jerusalem, the entire history of the monarchy is judged according to this standard. His interest in Israel's apostasy lies exclusively within this field of vision and does not include

¹OTT, I, 335f.; PH, 206.

other forms of apostasy that might have existed. Because his perspective is formed by the fact that both Israel and Judah have fallen, his work is to be understood as an admission of guilt.¹

There is an element in the Deuteronomist's view of history which is not derived from Deuteronomy, i.e., that the king was responsible for the cultic life of the people of God. From the Book of Deuteronomy the monarchy would be judged as an embarrassing fact of history. The Deuteronomist explains the apostasy of the kings on the basis that they were not right with God; they did not obey the law of Moses. This explanation is the result of two independent streams of tradition having been brought together in this work. Before this fusion took place there was no such relation between the "Israel-Covenant" tradition and those of the monarchy, i.e., the "David-Covenant." Deuteronomy does not view the monarchy favorably and certainly attaches no special election tradition to the king. This fusion of traditions comes only with the Deuteronomistic historical work. Notable depictions that resulted from these two streams of traditions coming together are the king being a trustee of the law and the way Josiah is thought of as the ideal king. A notable characteristic of Deuteronomy, by whose law the Deuteronomist judged the kings, is the threats and curses uttered for disobeying God's will. Thus the word of Yahweh itself functioned to bring judgment on Israel. This is brought about by its own inherent power.² The Deuteronomist is occupied with the "correspondence between promulgated word and historical fulfilment."³ To prove this formula the Deuteronomist incorporates a

¹OTT, I, 337; PH, 207.

²OTT, I, 338f.; PH, 207f.

³OTT, I, 340.

host of prophecies into his work. Thus the course of the history takes on the structure of "constantly promulgated prophetic predictions and their corresponding fulfilments."¹ It is here in von Rad's estimation that we get a correct perspective for this view of the history. "Everything that Ahijah of Shiloh, Jehu ben Hanani, Micaiah ben Imlah, Elijah, Huldah, etc., prophesied became history." Fundamentally expressed:

The history of Israel is a course of events which receives its own peculiar dramatic quality from the tension between constantly promulgated prophecies and their corresponding fulfilment.²

The answer the Deuteronomist gives to the question of why the Northern kingdom stood for two hundred years after Jeroboam's sin had determined its fate was that God's grace took into consideration the modicum of good the apostate kings possessed. Likewise when he answers the question of why Judah fell soon after the reign of the ideal king Josiah he explains that its fate had already been determined by the sin of Manasseh. But this also shows God's patience with Judah, a concept which is based on Yahweh's plan for history involving the house of David which was legitimated by Nathan's prophecy. The prophecy operates as a "saving word," "injected at one particular point into the history."³ This word preserved Judah for a long time even after her fate was sealed.

There has been a considerable development of the theology of history from the Succession Document to the Deuteronomistic theology of history, but the main difference between them is that the latter

¹OTT, I, 340. ²OTT, I, 340. See also PH, 209ff.

³OTT, I, 341. See also PH, 213ff.

interprets the past history on the basis of Deuteronomy. It can make more far reaching judgments than the Succession Document. Another difference lies in the Deuteronomist's intent to explain God's guidance of history by his word. The Succession Document, while actually only attesting to God's guidance by setting the history within the influence of the Nathan prophecy (2 Sam. 7), implies that it understand history as the fulfillment of God's word.¹ These two works are united in another way. They are linked by the accounts of wars and how they are related to politics: "in the decisive political events the initiative stems from prophets, who change the gears of history with a word of God."² So the theological notion which the Deuteronomist applies in a more intense way to the history of the monarchy is already present in the Succession Document.

The Deuteronomistic history was written during the exile when, according to von Rad the Heilsgeschichte had come to a "standstill."³ There are various strands which express its concern. One centers around the question of how Yahweh could reject his people. The Deuteronomist has offered us a "great 'doxology of judgment'" according to von Rad. But the Deuteronomist also attempts to explain how the Heilsgeschichte had come to an end in 722 and 587. This he does by explaining the history from the perspective of the "creative word" of Yahweh. This involves on the one hand the threats and curses of Deuteronomy that had moved through history until they reached their goal in the destruction of the nations, and on the other the saving word of the Nathan prophecy. This later word was active in history

¹OTT, I, 341f.

²OTT, I, 342.

³OTT, I, 342.

too, but the Deuteronomist does not indicate whether this word had achieved its goal, he only suggests, by closing with the account of the favorable treatment Jehoiachin received from the Babylonians, that Yahweh may begin his work again.¹

Von Rad affirms that the Deuteronomist "was not interested in drawing up a secular history, or a history of the faith and worship of Israel," rather, his concern was to show "how the word of Jahweh functioned in history."² Furthermore:

This Deuteronomistic theology of history was the first which clearly formulated the phenomenon of saving history, that is, of a course of history which was shaped and led to a fulfilment by a word of judgment and salvation continually injected into it.³

The word "injected" into history works for both destruction and salvation. The Deuteronomist's attempt to evaluate history in the light of this word is what gives his work its theological character. The life or death of the people is entirely dependent on this word.

The Deuteronomist, in view of the judgments, seeks to convey the impression that Yahweh was waiting for a "'turning'" (1 Sam. 7:3; 1 Kgs. 8:33, 35; II Kgs. 17:13, 23:25). Von Rad cites two passages which he believes are closely connected with this historical writing and which indicate that turning to Yahweh will be Israel's responsibility

¹OTT, I, 343. "One has to appreciate the dilemma into which the Deuteronomist was driven by the actual course of the history, in that it ended with the catastrophe of 587. On the basis of his theological pre-suppositions he had certainly no reason to lighten the darkness of this judgment. On the other hand, he could never concede that the saying about the lamp which was always to remain for David had now in fact 'failed'. As to any goal to which this saving word was coming he had nothing to say: the one thing he could do was just, in this direction, not to close the door of history, but to leave it open. This he did in the reflective conclusion of his work (II Kings xxv. 27ff.) His reference to Jehoiachin, and not to Zedekiah, as the last king of Judah could be connected with the fact that in his time Jehoiachin, and not Zedekiah, was regarded as the last king of Judah" (OTT, I, 343, n. 22).

²OTT, I, 343.

³OTT, I, 344.

during the exile. These texts are Deut. 30:1-10, 4:25-31; cf. I Kgs. 8:46ff. where the key word is וָּשׁוּב . This indicates that the judgment received in 587 was not the final word for God's people; the "turning" would not be a cultic one but a spiritual turning, it would be in the heart, and would be accomplished largely through prayer.¹

B. The Historical Work of the Chronicler

The historical work of the Chronicler consists of the Books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. It comes from the post-exilic community which took up the task of understanding herself as Israel and in so doing portrayed the whole history from Adam until the time after Nehemiah as taking place specifically for itself. The work covers the longest time-span in the Old Testament. Von Rad finds no firm evidence why the work came into existence, however it bases itself on the Deuteronomistic history. It also uses very late materials.²

The Chronicler's concept of Yahweh's action in the history of the monarchy is based on the Deuteronomistic history. The correspondence between guilt and punishment is among its prime concerns, but this is portrayed in a completely rational way; there is no sin or guilt without punishment. The Deuteronomist's pragmatism is carried even farther; a king's sin may have consequences that reach far beyond his own time. Despite this, the Chronicler wished to demonstrate that every generation encountered Yahweh's judgment and salvation, that each generation stands individually before Yahweh and its fate is linked to the anointed. The real question here is that of the individual's relation to Yahweh.

¹OTT, I, 345f.; PH, 217ff.

²OTT, I, 347f. See also GCW, 1ff., 18ff.

Concentration on the individuality of each generation and its confrontation with the entire revelation of Yahweh causes the work to lose the sense of the unity of Israel's history that is so conspicuous in the Deuteronomist's work.¹

The Chronicler's history begins with David. Nearly everything depends on David in this work. The Levitical offices which interest the Chronicler so much exist because of David. Like the Deuteronomistic history, the Chronicler's picture of David differs from that of the old sources. Here the pictures are shaped theologically, through fusion and separation of traditions. In the Chronicler's work David is the picture of innocence, a holy king without blemish. His sons do not rule over Israel but in the kingdom of Yahweh. Solomon sits on Yahweh's throne. The intention of the Chronicler is obvious; his age had no king, and as the trustee of the messianic tradition he portrayed the Nathan prophecy as extending down to his own day, thus signifying that the fulfillment was still to come. As the result of the fusion of the pictures of Moses and David, the king he expects will hold both royal and priestly offices. The picture the Chronicler draws of David assigning the Levites to the duty of temple singers is achieved by differentiating the "Levitical ark tradition" from the "Aaronic and Zadokite tent tradition" accomplished by separating the Ark and the Tabernacle. The Chronicler explains that when the Ark was taken to Jerusalem the Levites, who were its bearers, lost their job and so David assigned them to the office of temple singers.²

¹OTT, I, 349f.; GCW, 8ff.

²OTT, I, 351f.; GCW, 119ff., 98ff.; 134.

The purpose of the Chronicler is thus shown, he wishes "to legitimate cultic offices founded by David."¹

In the Chronicler's work the unity of Yahweh's revelation seems to be disappearing. The idea of one act of election has been overshadowed by specific acts of election, e.g., Jerusalem and Levi, and ideas of the law are less spiritual and unified and more external and separated as evidenced by his identification of cultic usages with ritual regulation.

C. Summary

The following points present themselves from our exposition of the Deuteronomistic history in the Books of Judges and Samuel:

1. The Davidic dynasty being after the Hexateuch the next focal point of the tradition means that following the traditional historical approach the covenant with David is developed first, then afterward the development of the traditions of Saul and then those of the Judges.
2. The Nathan prophecy becomes a very significant creative force in the tradition, a torso which is greatly expanded and given a wider historical context.
3. Interest here is not so much with historical facts as with their effects; this is theological historiography.
4. Compared to the Hexateuch where everything is miraculous, a completely new idea of Yahweh's action in history emerges here: Yahweh controls history in the human heart.

¹OTT, I, 352. See also GCW, 120f., 123, 132ff.

5. The historically inconceivable statements in Judges suggest that the Deuteronomist fashions them in striving to show the unity of history in God's eyes and from his concern for Israel's proper organization under Yahweh as he conceives of it on the basis of Deuteronomy.

The important points from the Deuteronomistic theology of history in 1 and 2 Kings are:

1. The Deuteronomistic theology of history, although employing a similar literary technique as the above, is written from the perspective of the judgments of 722 and 587, attempting to give the explanation for these disasters.
2. The Deuteronomist's picture of the history and the description of its contents are controlled by the combination of traditions to show how the word of God in Deuteronomy acted to bring judgment on Israel and Judah.
3. Interest here is with correlating the proclamation of word and historical fulfillment.
4. Thus the history of Israel is a course of events corresponding to prophecies and their fulfillments as arranged by the Deuteronomist.
5. It is a history created and receiving its movement from the word of God.
6. The Deuteronomist is not interested in a secular history or a history of the faith or cult but in how this word functions.
7. This is Heilsgeschichte, and the Deuteronomist was the first to clearly formulate it, though it is found less obviously in the Succession Document.

The Chronicler also distorts actual history in pursuing his theological purpose. He extends the time covered by the history from

Adam to after the time of Nehemiah. He extends the Nathan prophecy to his own day, showing that he still waits for its fulfillment.

VI. Witness of the Psalms and Wisdom to Israel's History

One of the consequences of von Rad's Heilsgeschichte approach is to relegate Wisdom and the Psalter, and various other scriptures, to the status of "Israel's answer" to the basic acts of God. His presupposition of revelation through history and his method of tradition-historical research are responsible for this situation, because the subject matter here does not lend itself to this treatment. According to von Rad, Yahweh intervened twice in Israel's history to establish a basis of salvation. The first was expressed in that summary of acts that have been referred to as the canonical Heilsgeschichte, the acts from the call of Abraham to Joshua. The second intervention came with the divine approval of David and the guarantee of his throne forever. Israel was dependent on these saving acts for her life before Yahweh. Even the prophets, although they were concerned with a new Israel, were dependent on these two data--the Sinai covenant and the Davidic covenant.¹

In response to these acts Israel offered either praise, complaints or queries. Israel was chosen for conversation with Yahweh. "In this intercourse with Jahweh Israel was revealed to herself."² In this activity we may look for a doctrine of man to take shape. This is superior to any picture of the doctrine made by the cross-section method.

Because of his restricted perspective from which he evaluates this literature theologically, von Rad sees the Enthronement Psalms,

¹OTT, I, 355.

²OTT, I, 356.

whose subject matter is Yahweh and the world, gods, and nations, as less representative of Israel's literature than the hymns, which tend to look back on Yahweh as creator and the one who guides the Heilsgeschichte. This is no doubt due to his idea that Heilsgeschichte, election, and covenant are basic to Israel's existence, while in the Enthronement Psalms these elements tend to recede. Therefore he refers to them as the "least 'Israelite'" of the poems.¹

The theophanies receive similar treatment and evaluation. In the cult Israel encountered what von Rad refers to as "the reality of the Beautiful."² This is to be distinguished from the statements of beauty made by Israel that were common to all men. The kind of beauty von Rad refers to here is that encountered by Israel in the contemplation of Yahweh's acts and revelation. This encounter was productive of her poetry, which along with narrative are manifestations of her "artistic charisma."³ Yahweh's acts provide a strong aesthetic element for the Psalms and Wisdom. Contemplation of the activity of God in creation gave greater content to faith and provided a "great delectari."⁴ Israel's delectari is produced by being able to see the reality of the world in the context of faith, and when Yahweh entered Israel's historical experience it was productive of the greatest beauty in creation. The expression of this usually takes the form of a theophany, which von Rad describes as "undoubtedly the most central subject of an Old Testament aesthetic."⁵ With this statement he relegates the theophany to the place of revealing "more clearly than all else how the special

¹OTT, I, 363.

²OTT, I, 364.

³OTT, I, 364.

⁴OTT, I, 365.

⁵OTT, I, 366.

experience of God undergone by Israel also became normative for the special features in the experience of beauty."¹

One consequence of von Rad's rejection of a systematic presentation for a retelling of the Heilsgeschichte is seen in his treatment of the "concept" of נִרְצָה in Israel's answer to the saving acts. Thus רָצָה is significant for the description of relationships between two parties and does not refer to an opinion reached on the basis of an absolute norm. Above all it refers to Yahweh's relationship with Israel, something experienced mainly in the cult. The expression נִרְצָה לַיהוָה refers to Yahweh's saving acts in history. In Deutero-Isaiah this idea develops until נִרְצָה becomes synonymous with salvation (יְשׁוּעָה). Thus Yahweh's righteousness lies in his acts that grant salvation.²

In this exposition an attempt is made to relate the questions of Israel to their understanding of various situations, suffering, death etc., as they arise out of belief in Yahweh, who is behind everything that occurs. Von Rad does not attempt to formulate any permanent ideas from what Israel believed in different times about Yahweh's actions and his relationship to Israel, these concepts are variable; rather he portrays how different ages understood Yahweh in relation to her everyday experience, from the group to the individual, and lets them stand in all their diversity and changeability.³ The idea of the individual brings perplexity about God's hiddenness and his apparent abandoning of the faithful. With the spiritualization of the sacral institutions a faith was produced that no longer needed externals,

¹OTT, I, 366f.

²OTT, I, 370ff. See also PH, 243ff.

³OTT, I, 383ff.

rites or Heilsgeschichte. What we have here is sort of a "mystical spirituality."¹ Along with this comment on spiritualization von Rad develops the evolution of the idea of life after death from the concept of Yahweh being "my portion" (Ps. 16:5f.) through to the alteration of this thought in apocalyptic literature where the resurrection is introduced.²

The dialogue in the Book of Job is interpreted from the perspective of the absence of what Yahweh had rooted in the history and the change to a spiritualized and radically individualized life of faith. Thus there is a disintegration of the old idea of faith and a corresponding loss of authority.³

Wisdom derived from experience is interpreted by pre-suppositions similar to those governing the theology of Yahweh's historical acts. There is no attempt to systematize the different theologies because Yahweh worked independently of man's reason. In Wisdom conclusions are not drawn, but affirmations are made based on experience.⁴ Israel's interest in the natural world is not one controlled by empiricism. She classified and examined the phenomena, but she grasped its significance through faith, she was in the realm of Yahweh's actions. She understood the order appearing in the world by her sense of Yahweh's hidden, controlling influence. It is obvious then that her concept of the world was different from that of the Greek idea of cosmos, and her idea of nature was not our modern one.⁵

¹OTT, I, 403.

²OTT, I, 403f.

³OTT, I, 408ff.

⁴OTT, I, 418ff.

⁵OTT, I, 420ff.

Theological wisdom takes previous wisdom and turns it into a divine call to men, in which form it serves to mediate revelation. From principles already in Prov. 1-9, a picture of world history and Heilsgeschichte can be drawn (Ecclesiasticus 1:4; 24:3). The depiction of Wisdom looking for a place to abide among men and finally finding her home in Israel is to be regarded as an aetiology of Israel, because it shows her place in relation to the nations. There is no direction to this history toward a goal, however, in which Israel will have to understand herself as God's people at a specific time. Interest in history has become nearly replaced by theological reflection and the desire to gain knowledge of nature, of the total world. There is little attention directed towards the traditions of the Heilsgeschichte. Compared to the priestly theology which links the Heilsgeschichte with Creation, theological wisdom envisages Wisdom in existence before Creation, and so the attempt to achieve linkage runs in the reverse direction. The proper understanding of Creation was possible only after one spoke of Israel and the revelation she had received. Wisdom does not understand Yahweh's work in Creation as displaying and testifying to his saving work in history. The meeting of man with Yahweh in the cult which receives its impetus from the Heilsgeschichte is not a factor here. This seems to bear the consequence that the concept of the people of God is not within this invitation of Wisdom to men to follow her. Here the appeal is made in ordinary secular life and concerns the individual; there is no appeal to Heilsgeschichte for legitimation. This is achieved from Creation itself. A piety is manifest here without need of signs, miracles, etc. The consequence this had for the survival of faith is obvious:

Heilsgeschichte cannot be bypassed for a legitimacy derived directly from Creation without skepticism resulting.¹

Skepticism does indeed result. It was brought about by doubts about Yahweh's willingness to act in the history and the life of the individual. Because it is with Ecclesiastes that wisdom literature lost its contact with the old way of Israel's thinking about history, in fact its message makes no reference to history, von Rad assesses it rather negatively from the perspective of theology.²

Summary

The following points are to be noted from this discussion of the Psalms and wisdom literature as Israel's answer to the saving acts:

1. Von Rad's presupposition of revelation through history and his traditio-historical method are responsible for the secondary place these literary groups have in his theology because they do not lend themselves well to this kind of treatment.
2. The Enthronement Psalms have less to say about Yahweh as Creator and the one who guides the Heilsgeschichte than the hymns do, so the Enthronement Psalms become of less importance than the hymns.
3. Theophanies are relegated to the area of the aesthetic rather than to the idea of revelation.
4. Because of von Rad's principle of rejecting systematic treatment of the Old Testament, he treats the concept of righteousness along with Israel's answer to the divine acts and stresses that as Israel's relationship to Yahweh was something experienced in the cult, it takes on an experiential and historical character.

¹OTT, I, 441ff.

²OTT, I, 453ff.

5. Wisdom in its various classifications makes no appeal to Heilsgeschichte. Theological wisdom draws its legitimation directly from creation itself rather than from the Heilsgeschichte.
6. Doubts about God's willingness to act in history are the results of such ideas and skepticism results.

VII. History and the Prophetic Traditions

A. General Observations

In a volume separate from that dealing with the historical traditions of Israel, von Rad presents the theology of the prophetic traditions. Even with this separation¹ he speaks of the prophetic books as "history books" because they seek "to portray eschatological events in advance."² Von Rad is careful in placing the emphasis on the Old Testament as a history book which portrays a history brought about by God's word. He does this to avoid describing a "thought world" of Israel and circumvent the possible impression that he is dealing with abstract thinking.³ The prophetic oracles are not to be read as if they were a composite of timeless ideas, rather they should be understood as a word spoken for a particular time and situation. Only in certain instances were the prophets concerned with objective

¹"Within the scope of a theology of the historical traditions there can be no mention of the prophets, as the characteristic thing about their proclamation is that they deny the efficacy of the old divine actions for their contemporaries, and that they perceive God's rising up to completely new acts in history in their time" (OTT, I, vii.).

²"It may not be superfluous to remark that even the prophetic books are 'history books,' insofar as they do not seek to transmit teachings, truths, or the like, but rather to portray eschatological events in advance" (EOTH, p. 25. See also OTT, II, 357f.).

³See also OTT, II, 59, 86ff.; EOTH, p. 25.

truth; their main concern was criticizing the religious traditions Israel was dependent upon for her life. It was presenting their message to a people who were confronted by a specific situation, not concern for the faith or kerygma, that occupied their attention. Collectively, the preaching of the prophets did not depend on a central and determinate message to which all conformed.¹

Yet, von Rad holds that there are central features which find a place in all the addresses of the prophets. One is Yahweh's "new word for Israel which he allowed the prophet to read off from the horizon of world-history," the second is, "the election tradition, within which the prophet and his hearers alike stand."² The prophetic activity may be described as calling into question the security produced by the old tradition with a word of judgment and then turning the tradition into an antitypical form of prediction of new things to come. The prophet's message is brought into being by tensions produced by three factors. They are:

the new eschatological word with which Jahweh addresses Israel, the old election tradition, and the personal situation, be it one which incurred penalty or one which needed comfort, of the people addressed by the prophet.³

¹OTT, II, 129f.

²OTT, II, 130. The word had "creative power" (OTT, II, 86). In the prophets the divine word is "event," a "unique happening in history" (OTT, II, 87). When the word overtook a man it placed him in a new historical situation; what we have then are "'word-events'" (OTT, II, 88).

³OTT, II, 130. In his exposition of the prophets, von Rad is mainly concerned with the message of the writing, or classical, prophets for its indication of their relationship to the various election traditions. Pre-classical prophecy is a subdivision of "General Considerations in Prophecy." Here there is a discussion of the origins of this phase of prophecy, prophecy's relation to various terms associated with the concept of prophet etc., and a discussion of Elijah and Elisha in whose activity we get a glimpse of the things dealt with in the proclamations of the later prophets (OTT, II, 25). Elements found in either

B. History and Eighth-Century Prophecy

The eighth-century prophets base themselves on Israel's religious tradition, and their preaching might even be called a "dialogue with the tradition," in the process of which the tradition was "made to speak to their own day."¹ But for von Rad's understanding of history, the major import of the eighth-century prophets lies in the new element which

the Deuteronomist or the classical prophets are embryonic in the accounts of Elijah and Elisha, or directly related to the pre-classical prophets: (a) Older concepts of the prophetic word, such as found in Elijah's utterances, can be traced to their full theological development in Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah (OTT, II, 89ff.; cf. I, 342). (b) In their involvement in political revolutions prophets like Elisha understood themselves as tools used by Yahweh in his plan for history. All the suffering and vicissitudes of life were punishment aimed at making Israel a people representative of their God. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah developed this idea much more fully a century later. Citing W. Reisner ("Eschatologische Gottesprüche in den Eisalegenden," *ThZ*, 9 [1953], pp. 321ff.), von Rad commends his insight into the prophecy dealing with "the meal in the jar" (I Kgs. 17:14), and "the announcement of cheap prices to-morrow" (II Kgs. 7:1) as being "eschatological oracles, and forerunners of predictions" such as we find in Amos 9:13 (OTT, II, 29f., n.48). (c) The accounts of the prophecies about Ahab and his war with the Syrians (I Kgs. 20), the account of Micaiah ben Imlah's prophecy of disaster for Israel and Ahab and Jehoshaphat (I Kgs. 22), Elisha's call for the anointing of Jehu as king of Israel and the subsequent extermination of the house of Ahab are examples of how the prophets, in "the decisive political events," "change the gears of history with a word of God" (OTT, I, 342). The theological theme which the Deuteronomist employs in a more radical way is already set, i.e., Yahweh creates and directs history by his word.

¹OTT, II, 177. The messages of the prophets are based on different election traditions. The traditions of the patriarchs and the Deliverance from Egypt (northern traditions) existed independently from the David-Zion traditions of Judah. Even by the eighth century these traditions existed independently side by side (OTT, I, 46f.). In the prophetic literature only Amos does not seem to depend on any old traditions as a basis for his visions. But von Rad states that because he was a Judean "we must assume" that he bases himself on the southern traditions, i.e., those related to David and Zion (OTT, II, 132). We have no information on how he considered the Exodus tradition. Hosea's message is based on the Heilsgeschichte. He is a prophet of the north and his security comes from basing his arguments in history (OTT, II, 140). Isaiah's message depends mainly on the Jerusalem tradition (OTT, II, 149). He appears to be ignorant of the covenant and conquest traditions (OTT, I, 47; II, 150, 157), but he does show dependence on

characterized their messages--that judgment had already been pronounced on Israel by Yahweh. For a correct understanding of this new element one must take note of the changing political scene. Assyria was threatening Palestine, and with this situation the prophets pronounced judgment on their contemporaries' entire way of life: social, economic, political and cultic. Their message, as we have already pointed out, was based on the old traditions which they interpreted differently from their contemporaries. These old traditions were no insurance of salvation; for the prophets, history was a testimony of man's opposition to God, and thus Israel's history was a failure.¹

But Yahweh had not ended his working with Israel. Here is a major point in von Rad's understanding of Heilsgeschichte: "one of prophecy's greatest achievements was to recapture for faith the dimension in which Jahweh had revealed himself par excellence, that of

traditions about David, and his work contains a messianic theme (OTT, II, 169, 174). Micah also deals with Jerusalem, and he is discussed almost incidentally along with Isaiah (OTT, II, 150ff.).

¹OTT, II, 137, 177, 180f., 273. Amos' prophecy was concerned with the disasters that were to come upon Israel, but his attention was directed to the activity of Yahweh, not Assyria. He was convicted that his contemporaries were all deluded. They looked forward to the Day of Yahweh and took refuge in the idea that Yahweh had elected Israel and that this offered them salvation. But the Exodus event has to be understood as merely one of God's designs for his general guidance of history; "the saving aspect of that divine redemptive act [heilsgeschichtliche Besonderheit] had to be extinguished for them" (OTT, II, 137; TAT,⁵ II, 144). Isaiah's concern is with obedience to divine law. Breaking the commandments had had its effect on the broad designs for history. Israel had been rebellious, and history had come to an undesirable end, God's work with Israel had been without the desired results. The account of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is an illustration of the way Yahweh will deal with Israel in history. The movement of the Heilsgeschichte begins here, and from this vantage point the prophet looks to the future (OTT, II, 151ff., 155). Micah is radical in his judgment--Jerusalem will be blotted out of existence (OTT, II, 150).

history and politics."¹ Since about David's time Israel had assumed the right to direct her own future. This had brought the Heilsgeschichte to a "standstill." But now the nations and the political field were brought into the sphere of Yahweh's actions. It should be clear, however, that this activity differs from that of the earlier period, mainly due to the period of enlightenment in Solomon's day.² There are no miraculous acts here, the chain of events remains unbroken. Still Yahweh's action is visible, and according to evidence in Amos (Amos 4:6ff.) there was amazement on his part that the people did not comprehend this. Isaiah (Isa. 7:18-20) is even more emphatic about the clarity of Yahweh's action in history.³

The characteristic feature of the prophetic view of history is: "not only does it recognise most clearly Jahweh's designs and intentions in history, it also sees the various historical forces involved in quite a different light from other people."⁴ The great nations are

¹OTT, II, 182.

²Von Rad is here referring to the direct intervention of Yahweh in history portrayed in stories with a miraculous element as well as the holy war where Yahweh accomplished his deeds without the help of men (cf. OTT, I, 39ff., 60f.; PH, 68ff.). The prophets see Yahweh behind political events again. Israel is not shaping these events with her own hands (OTT, II, 134, 143).

³OTT, II, 182ff.

⁴OTT, II, 183. While Amos' accurate observations of the historical situation amazes von Rad, he states we must not think of Amos as one who foresaw the inevitable course of political events. Assyria was of little importance to him in comparison with his emphasis on Israel having to deal directly with Yahweh, and Yahweh performing his new historical acts (OTT, II, 134). In Hosea von Rad sees the historical form of judgment almost losing interest in comparison with Yahweh's dealings (OTT, II, 144). From Isa. 23:11b von Rad shows how Isaiah in looking to Yahweh's action in history bases himself on tradition (Ex. 14:13). "Looking" is nearly synonymous with "faith"

insignificant in comparison to Yahweh's power. They are tools in Yahweh's hands. The relation of Yahweh to history is quite clear to them. Isaiah views history as composed of God's purposes and a corresponding element of human power. This is an attempt to grasp this problem both rationally and by faith. This is not an admission that the prophets held an objective view of history as we do, however. History is related to and takes place for Israel in the prophets. If we look more closely at the prophetic understanding of history we will notice that these historical events have not been brought about by Yahweh in complete freedom; they are "the fulfilment of promises he had already made to Israel in the old traditions."¹ The "eschatological events of salvation are to correspond to the earlier events as antitype and type."² The prophets have reinterpreted the old traditions, but now only the new thing in the future is efficacious for the salvation of Israel.³ The old traditions which spoke of the

(OTT, II, 161). This faith is set within the wider context of Yahweh's "work" (עָשָׂה and עָשָׂה וְעָשָׂה). This expression of Yahweh's work seems to be Isaiah's own formulation. Isaiah uses the idea of "purpose" (כִּנְיָן) alongside of and nearly as the equivalent of "work" (עָשָׂה וְעָשָׂה) (OTT, II, 162). Because of the relationship of purpose to the deliberations of a council, probably the royal council in heaven with its influence in political affairs is meant, the idea of plan is suggested in which Yahweh's purpose will be worked out in history. This is a new element in eighth-century prophecy. Here, however, we must think only in terms of the plan for Zion set in the context of universal history, not general guidance in history by divine providence. The prophet claims, basing his authority on divine inspiration, to know the divine plan behind the actual political happenings of his day. This is what von Rad means by the prophetic view of history (OTT, 162f.).

¹OTT, II, 184.

²OTT, II, 185.

³The symbolic portrayal of Hosea's marriage is a pointer to Israel's disloyalty and subsequent punishment, but beyond this is a hint of a new saving activity. Hosea 2:16 (14) speaks of Yahweh speaking tenderly to Israel, taking her back into the wilderness. This von Rad interprets as a new saving event which Hosea sees typologically

all sufficient acts of Yahweh leading Israel into the land, setting up and guaranteeing David's throne and founding Zion, were now unbelievable because of the judgments that had since fallen on Israel and were even now in progress. The message of judgment was not founded on the old Yahwistic tradition,¹ therefore salvation could only lie in new acts to be performed by Yahweh in the future. Salvation is portrayed here as taking place in close proximity to the fall of judgment. The way the prophets predict the future action of God and relate it to the old traditions which they reinterpret is viewed by von Rad as an eschatological perspective. The people expected God's faithfulness to remain as it had been; the prophets predict the opposite. The prophets are convinced that Yahweh will perform new saving acts to bring about salvation, and they see their task as announcing these events before they arrive.²

prefigured in the old action, only all imperfections have been overshadowed by the glory of the new (OTT, II, 145f.). Isaiah, standing on the Jerusalem tradition, first sees Yahweh defending the city, later rising up against it. Isaiah's appeal to faith is based upon the old tradition of the holy war where God himself destroyed the enemy, a miracle. Here is an elimination of reliance upon oneself. Deliverance was in the future, especially in God's sovereign action. This is what Isaiah means by faith, and the object of this faith is still future and does not exist for his contemporaries who reject his interpretation of the traditions (OTT, II, 150ff., 160f.). This future deliverance of the city in the face of Assyria's assault stands in a typological relationship to David's founding of the empire at first (OTT, II, 164f.). In showing interest in the father of David, Isaiah is not only thinking of an anointed one to come in the future but a new David. The prophecy of Micah 5:1 (2) can hardly be otherwise interpreted. Because Micah refers to Bethlehem and not Jerusalem he signified David's return; Yahweh will take up his messianic work from the beginning. Von Rad admits that on the basis of Isa. 11:1 one cannot be sure that Isaiah was expecting a new David, but since Jeremiah (30:9) and Ezekiel (34:23) make this assumption explicit, and Micah draws attention to Bethlehem instead of Jerusalem, it is to be presupposed that Isaiah had David's return in mind (OTT, II, 170).

¹OTT, II, 178.

²OTT, II, 185f.

C. History in the Prophetic Messages of the
Babylonian and Early Persian Period

Discussion of history in the prophetic messages of this period centers around the "new" saving act of Yahweh.¹ In Deuteronomy, hope is placed in effecting the old promises for the Israel of Josiah's day, but Jeremiah² puts his trust in a new saving act by which Yahweh will surpass the Sinai covenant.³ Jeremiah, like the eighth-century prophets, denies that security may be found in pious appeals to even the holiest and most venerable of things. The Temple itself could offer no refuge for those who disregarded the Decalogue. Jerusalem would be rejected.⁴ Jeremiah gazes into the future and, on the basis of the movements of universal history, sees the Babylonians as instruments in God's hands to punish Judah. It is a time of judgment and God will destroy his work in history.⁵

An important element of Jeremiah's prophecies of salvation is the idea of the return from the exile and the work of restoration that

¹OTT, II, 188ff. The prophets making the transition to the Babylonian era--Nahum; Habakkuk and Zephaniah--appear to be of less significance for von Rad's understanding of history than Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. The lack of a judgment message in Nahum is explained by his prophecy being probably from the time of Josiah, in the period of reform, which would seem to contain promise for the future (OTT, II, 189). Habakkuk on the other hand, dating between Josiah and the siege of Jerusalem, presents a more foreboding picture of God's work of shaping history (OTT, II, 191). Habakkuk's message about the power of faith to save is an "echo" from Isaiah, especially where he speaks of "work" (עֲשֵׂה) (OTT, II, 191). Zephaniah is given some mention but only as a stepping stone to the treatment of Jeremiah (OTT, II, 191).

²Jeremiah is anchored in traditions specific to Israel, i.e., the Exodus covenant and the Sinai Covenant. He is familiar with the David traditions, but his limited use of them shows that they are not relevant for him (OTT, II, 192f.).

³Yet for Jeremiah the new thing did not mean that the Sinai covenant would become outdated. Israel is still to obey the commandments. The new thing is the change in men's hearts (OTT, II, 270).

⁴OTT, II, 197f.

⁵OTT, II, 208.

will take place. But these prophecies have no intention of suggesting that this restoration will correspond with the condition that existed previously. There has been a definite break between the old and new, more radically depicted by Jeremiah than his predecessors. Jeremiah prophesies of a new covenant because the original covenant had been broken and Israel no longer had one.¹ From now on the divine will for man will be conveyed to them in a different way, i.e., it will be placed in their hearts. Still it is only on the basis of the severe judgment found in Jer. 13:23 that one may understand the new covenant correctly, because here we are told that Israel cannot, by herself, change the status of her alienated relationship with God.²

The climax of Ezekiel's forecasts correspond to Jeremiah's. Ezekiel owes his picture of Israel's origin to the priestly tradition.³ He considers Israel lost, and illustrates this by a historical summary in which he brings his indictments to bear (Ezk. 16, 20, 23). Special interest centers in the summary of the history where an account is given from the election of Israel in Egypt to the possession of the land. This account of the Heilsgeschichte differs from that found in the

¹OTT, II, 212.

²OTT, II, 216ff., 270. In Jer. 31:31 the word "new" suggests "the complete negation of the saving events on which Israel had hitherto depended" (OTT, II, 271). This confronted Israel with the question of the validity of that which she depended on for salvation. "The saving power of the old ordinances is abolished, and Israel can only find salvation in new, future saving appointments on Jahweh's part" (OTT, II, 271).

³OTT, II, 225. Ezekiel judges Israel's behavior against the standard of the ordinances. When he speaks of sin he is talking about the violation of sacral orders. The basis of his pronouncements lies in the priestly sacral tradition. His sacral understanding of the world even determines the form his prophecies of the new Israel will take (OTT, I, 224f.).

Hexateuch, first because Israel is depicted as disobeying God's revelation and not forsaking the cultic practices of Egypt. The idea is given that Israel was all but rejected while still in Egypt. The second point is that when Yahweh took Israel into the wilderness and attempted to make her a nation to himself by giving her the commandments this too failed. Third, the commandments were given to the following generation, but they would not keep them either. Then he gave them commandments "'that were not good'" (Ezk. 20:25) which when followed made their defilement obvious.¹

Ezekiel presents Israel's relationship to the canonical Heilsgeschichte as a series of Yahweh's actions that failed, and on Israel's part as continuous disobedience to Yahweh. In so presenting the history, Ezekiel distorted it in some ways. There are four phases to the history.² All but the last take a cyclical course rather than following the more progressive features of the old Heilsgeschichte. Ezekiel's depiction of God's acts is characterized by repetition, and this is preparatory for the last act of Yahweh³ which is to take them back into the "wilderness of the peoples" (Ezk. 20:35). This is the remedy offered to Israel for her condition.⁴

¹OTT, II, 225f. This description ends approximately at the conquest. While von Rad asserts that we cannot say whether details of this description of the history were native to the tradition, yet the portrayal of a series of failures and punishments is specifically the work of Ezekiel. Ezekiel has turned the "venerable tradition into a monstrous thing" (OTT, II, 226).

²(a) "Jahweh reveals himself;" (b) "Israel disobeys;" (c) Jahweh acts in wrath;" (d) "Jahweh spares Israel" (OTT, II, 226).

³OTT, II, 227.

⁴OTT, II, 227f.

Ezekiel's scope of history also included the monarchical period although his resources were limited.¹ In the sequence of his views of the monarchy, his history of Jerusalem as a girl, and the depiction of the two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, we have a final and new version of Israel's history. In Ezekiel's depiction two things have to be remembered: he wants to give a reason for the judgment which is coming soon; and he also speaks with a view to a saving event, which he sees already taking shape.²

There appear to be three basic points in Ezekiel's presentation: (a) The control sin has over men will be ended by the revocation of God's plan for history;³ (b) Israel will be granted a new act of salvation which will take place in the people's hearts; (c) The saving act will be analogous to the making of the old covenant. A people will be brought into existence that are able to keep the commandments. Furthermore, this saving work also involves Israel having a land and a king and Yahweh's glory being shown to the nations.⁴

Like his fellow prophets Deutero-Isaiah bases himself on certain old traditions, yet unlike the others takes the freedom to go beyond

¹Material taken from annals were not adequate for his needs and the Deuteronomistic histories had not yet been written. Ezekiel needed something like this which considered history, not from the perspective of politics, but from viewpoint of the depiction of God's activity. Because of this lack of sources his portrayal of the accounts of this period are not as clear as that concerned with the earlier Heilsgeschichte. Although speaking directly of history he uses allegory in his depiction (OTT, II, 228).

²OTT, II, 229.

³The departure of the glory of God from the temple (Ezk. 10:18f.; 11:22ff.) was an event which indicated that the old had passed away and would be replaced by a new saving event (OTT, II, 230).

⁴OTT, II, 235.

them.¹ He too is concerned about something "new" that Yahweh will do. Because he gives more prominence to the Exodus tradition than any other, he can only see the new saving acts in the form of a new Exodus.² Von Rad sees the prominence of this tradition as the reason for Deutero-Isaiah's comments on the patriarchs, for they were the starting place of the Heilsgeschichte which then moved on to the Exodus.³

Von Rad describes Deutero-Isaiah as seeing the "whole business of world-history from the viewpoint of its correspondence with a previously spoken prophetic word,"⁴ thus suggesting an affinity between Deutero-Isaiah's views of history and those of the Deuteronomistic historian, in particular the position expressed in the Deuteronomistic theology of history. Deutero-Isaiah differs from the Deuteronomist only in terms of practical interest.⁵ In Deutero-Isaiah's understanding of the power controlling world history, he lets it be known that Yahweh can foretell events yet to happen. God's word is active in forming the future; everything depends upon Yahweh's word. The preaching

¹Deutero-Isaiah uses all three of the prominent traditions: Exodus, David, and Zion (OTT, II, 239f.).

²OTT, II, 239. Deutero-Isaiah does not consider the creation of the world independently from the historical acts; rather it is Yahweh's first historical act and witnesses to Yahweh's saving will. Because of this Deutero-Isaiah can speak of Yahweh as creator of both world and Israel. His mention of the creation of Israel is made with reference to the Exodus tradition, especially the crossing of the Red Sea. Thus creation and redemption possess a common meaning. Deutero-Isaiah has fused two originally independent traditions. The moving force behind this fusion was that because of the situation of the exiles in Babylon it was necessary to make an appeal to the power and might of God on a scale not made before when they were a nation (OTT, II, 240f.).

³OTT, II, 238ff.

⁴OTT, II, 242.

⁵Deutero-Isaiah uses history for the purpose of relieving the anxiety that the Babylonian gods would prove to be mightier than Yahweh (OTT, II, 242).

of Deutero-Isaiah is intimately connected with the events surrounding Cyrus. He had given a new direction to world history, and this had "set events in motion" which were moving towards the end; Yahweh had allowed Cyrus to carry out Yahweh's will in history.¹ Israel is the object of Yahweh's all-encompassing plan in history. But apart from other events "the saving event proper is the departure of the exiles from Babylon and their return home, and the advent of Jahweh himself, who is to accompany his people."² When von Rad speaks of the "proper significance" of the event, he means the event can only be understood adequately when it is considered in the context of the Heilsgeschichte. The return of the "redeemed" from Babylon corresponds to the Exodus event in the Heilsgeschichte. But the original Exodus will be surpassed by this new act. The crux of the matter for von Rad seems to lie in the assertion that when the prophet refers to the new exodus he is calling Israel's original confession into question. He goes to great length to convince his contemporaries that they should disregard the event on which they have been basing their faith and place their faith in a new and surpassing event. Von Rad asserts that the prophet thinks that God's saving activity comes in two phases as indicated by his use of the idea of "the new" and "former things."³ Von Rad holds that when the prophet uses the expression "former things" he means the Heilsgeschichte, running from the call of Abraham to the destruction of Jerusalem. All these events were foretold and occurred according to the word of Yahweh. Deutero-Isaiah believes that all Heilsgeschichte "is history foretold by Jahweh."⁴ In this respect he is in agreement

¹OTT, II, 243.

²OTT, II, 244f.

³OTT, II, 246.

⁴OTT, II, 247.

with the Deuteronomist. The new saving event will occur even though the Heilsgeschichte has been at a standstill, and the prophet can see it beforehand from the events taking place in secular history.¹

Deutero-Isaiah demands that his contemporaries forget about the old events, i.e., the venerable old traditions, but he also gives them assurance that there is after all continuity because "the new as well as the old had been foretold long ago," the "continuity of prediction" was what legitimized the message.²

Thus von Rad sees Deutero-Isaiah in harmony with Jeremiah and Ezekiel. All three deny the saving power of the old actions and direct their contemporaries to a future saving event, an event that will follow the pattern of the events of the Heilsgeschichte, thus the continuity of the history is established. "The old is therefore renewed, it is present in the new, in the mysterious dialectic of valid and obsolete."³

D. History in the Messages of the Prophets of the Later Persian Period⁴

Von Rad finds it remarkable that the return of the exiles, an event of such importance to Deutero-Isaiah, did not leave a greater impression on its own or future generations. It was not considered as a saving event by those who took part in it; if they had, the event would not have been allowed to lose its significance. It was not celebrated as the fulfillment of a prediction, therefore, the fulfillment of Deutero-Isaiah's predictions was still future.⁵

¹OTT, 246ff.

²OTT, II, 248.

³OTT, II, 272.

⁴Trito-Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah.

⁵OTT, II, 278.

With these prophets the restoration of the Temple and Jerusalem is the subject of prophetic prediction.¹ Haggai and Zechariah are the most important prophets in providing the material for the exposition of this subject. They are concerned with the soon coming of Yahweh and the establishment of his kingdom. For them, the rebuilding of the destroyed temple is a prerequisite of Yahweh's coming and the establishment of his kingdom.² Both these prophets were trying to bring their listeners to a correct understanding of their times. They had gone through a difficult time but the way they use the word "now" is evidence of the realistic way they thought of the Heilsgeschichte, "from now on it is a time of salvation,"³ this time was brought on by

¹OTT, II, 281. Zion is the goal of Deutero-Isaiah's prophecy of "eschatological restoration," while Trito-Isaiah uses Zion as a starting place for his ideas. The city is still waiting for the fulfillment of the promises, and still not redeemed. His message closes with his warning to his contemporaries and his conviction that the restoration of the city by Yahweh's saving power will be awe inspiring and an event of world-wide significance. Haggai's and Zechariah's ideas are closely linked to the spiritual situation of their day. The problems of politics over against placing one's security in Yahweh are no longer present. Israel lives under the protection of another nation, and because of the economic situation spiritual interests were limited. The rebuilding of the Temple is therefore the primary concern. This must be accomplished before the coming of Yahweh and his kingdom, and the position one takes in relation to the rebuilding is determinative of one's relation to God. Haggai perceived Yahweh beginning anew and understood that a time of salvation was at hand. In relation to this was his desire to leave open the possibility that Yahweh would do something in history, and so did not confine the people's salvation to the Temple (OTT, II, 281ff.). Zechariah, in his concern for the Temple, perceives an eschatological saving event in the form of the Davidic Zerubbabel. For both prophets the saving action will be accomplished by God's power and spirit. God gives the strength and authorization to build (Hag. 1:14; 2:5; Zech. 4:6). The language of Zechariah is reminiscent of the holy war, and the spirit and power of Yahweh would be again manifest at the coming of the final saving event (OTT, II, 284ff.). Malachi and Jonah do not figure in von Rad's exposition strongly, because the message of eschatology is weak in Malachi. Jonah is not to be read as history and this explains the limited statements made about him (OTT, II, 288ff.).

²OTT, II, 281.

³OTT, II, 286.

the building of the Temple. Again, as with his comments about Deutero-Isaiah's idea of a "proper" saving event,¹ von Rad mentions that the events that brought on this time of salvation, i.e., the decree of Cyrus and the return of the exiles, were not given any great degree of sacral significance, neither were they ever thought of as saving events.² Von Rad here sees the saving event involved with the building of the Temple of primary significance.

Postscript. Von Rad wishes to convey the idea to us that there was a conviction shared by all the prophets: "They stood exactly at that turning point in history which was crucial for the existence of God's people."³ Furthermore, "their passionate demolition of the old, in particular of all false means of security before God, as well as what they say of the approach of entirely new and terrifying divine acts of salvation" must be understood from this vantage point.⁴ All the prophets agreed "that the new thing which they expected was already prefigured in the old, and that the old would be present in the new in perfect form."⁵ The old takes on "prophetic significance," what Yahweh

¹See below

²OTT, II, 286.

³OTT, II, 299.

⁴OTT, II, 299. The prophets "are conscious of being placed inside a historical continuum with wide perspectives over both past and future. Within it, however, each prophet stands as it were at the cross roads where God's dealings with Israel, which have been almost stationary, suddenly and dramatically begin to move again" (OTT, II, 298). The message of these men comes at a desperate moment, for men can no longer take refuge in the power of the old appointments to save them.

⁵OTT, II, 299. This is what von Rad means when he says his concern is, "to put the prophets back" into the Heilsgeschichte: the new would be antitypical to the old acts of the Heilsgeschichte; their prophecies of the new are antitypes of the old acts in the Heilsgeschichte (OTT, II, 298).

had "begun and established" would not be nullified; rather Yahweh would "link on to it, in order to bring it the more splendidly to completion."¹ To put it in other words, "they shared in a common, spell-bound watching for the new thing, and along with it a denial of the saving power [Heilskräftigkeit] of Jahweh's old appointments."² This von Rad affirms even though he does not see it fully expressed until Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. Life and death for Israel depended on the future encounter with God, therefore, "projecting the old traditions into the future was the only possible way open to the prophets of making material statements about a future which involved God."³

E. Summary

The following points emerge from the discussion of the prophets:

1. The prophetic messages have their basis in specific, inherited election traditions.
2. They interpreted these traditions for their own day in a different manner from their contemporaries in that they did not believe that these old traditions insured salvation for Israel.
3. The prophets saw Israel's history as a history of failure and the advance of foreign conquerors as judgments from Yahweh.
4. The prophets recognize God's actions and designs in history, i.e., history as related to Israel, and Yahweh's dealings with Israel

¹OTT, II, 299.

²OTT, II, 299; TAT,⁵ II, 311, cf. TAT,⁶ I, 9; "das Charakteristische ihrer Verkündigung ist ja, dass sie die Heilskräftigkeit der alten göttlichen Setzungen für ihre Zeitgenossen bestreiten."

³OTT, II, 299.

overshadow attention to other historical forces in their own right.

5. The prophets look for salvation in the future, in new future acts of Yahweh which are analogous to the old acts. This is the origin of prophetic eschatology.
6. The prophets by recognizing the activity of Yahweh recapture history and politics for the faith which had been lost with the enlightenment and the autonomous political course taken by the monarchy, which brought the Heilsgeschichte to a standstill. History with its movement is again created by projecting the old acts into the future where they provide for an understanding of a history involving God.
7. The new way of seeing salvation in a future act of Yahweh is more highly developed in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah than by earlier prophets. This means that since all the prophets are said to have had this idea of history the ones which are not so explicit are interpreted according to the trends in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah.
8. Deutero-Isaiah seems to be the most explicit in determining what acts in the future are the "proper" saving acts, i.e., acts viewed as analogous to the old saving acts.
9. The prophetic books are history books because they proclaim eschatological events in advance.

VIII. History in the Apocalyptic Literature

The characteristic way Israel looked to the future and to eschatological events remained with her even after prophecy ceased. Her way of describing her history and God's activity in bringing history

to a close, however, took on a new form that we call apocalyptic.¹ In this literature the final events of history were all foretold in the distant past. The difference between the prophetic view of history and the apocalyptic view is of utmost importance. The prophets anchored their message in the Heilsgeschichte, the election traditions. There is no connection between this view and the apocalyptic view of history. It is "completely out of the question" for apocalyptic to have originated in prophecy; there is "incompatibility" between the apocalyptic and the prophetic views of history.² The ideas about history in apocalyptic are not the same as found previously in Israel. Earlier Israel experienced her election in history and found her identity through the Heilsgeschichte. However, in apocalyptic literature history does not have a confessional character, nor does it speak of God's acts, which provided the basis for salvation, and out of which the earlier history of Israel was formed, the saving event is future and eschatological. History in the apocalyptic literature is without theological content. It is not concerned with the Heilsgeschichte; rather its attention is directed towards the "unity of world history."³ But the view is a static one, and its movement is of a different kind: the stone smiting the image's feet; the beasts coming out of the sea. An increase of evil is indicated and the history moves towards

¹OTT, II, 301.

²OTT, II, 303. The 5th German ed., 1968, contains an expanded argument of von Rad's concerning the origin of apocalyptic and the related tradition-historical problem. His decision that the origin of apocalyptic is to be found in Wisdom remains constant. However, his language relative to his denial that the rootage of apocalyptic literature may be found elsewhere is softened to "das ist nicht möglich" (TAT,⁵ II, 320). See below, pp. 237f.

³OTT, II, 304.

destruction. Another important difference between the apocalyptic view of history and the prophetic view is that while the prophets write out of their own place in history the apocalyptists hid their place in history. All the ages of world history have been predetermined.¹

Summary

In connection with the prophetic messages the following points should be noted:

1. A distinction is made between prophecy and apocalyptic; while the prophets base themselves on old traditions which they demolish and project into the future, apocalyptic abandons this approach. This causes von Rad to depict the purpose of apocalyptic in contrast to the prophets.
2. Even though apocalyptic abandons the approach via Heilsgeschichte, von Rad still considers it within the Heilsgeschichte because it draws a picture of history from the creation of the world to the coming of the kingdom of God.²
3. The latter seems to illustrate von Rad's understanding of history as any description of Yahweh's activity in history even though it exhibits no organic or logical continuity with any other ideas of history.

¹In Daniel there is no reference to the election tradition, nor reference to Israel's history. In Daniel's vision of the night the history he sketches only involves empires, and he describes the son of man coming not from Israel but from heaven. The saving act of God he envisions lies in the future, an eschatological event (OTT, II, 303). Yet Daniel does not make a complete break with the Heilsgeschichte, he believes Israel should remain faithful to the commandments, yet these commandments are now absolute and timeless without need of reinterpretation. They have been separated from the Heilsgeschichte (OTT, II, 309). Characteristic of Daniel's view of history is that all, whether past or future, was foretold by God (OTT, II, 314).

²Cf. OTT, II, 357.

IX. The Old Testament and the New

In discussing this topic we shall consider the part entitled "The Old Testament and the New" (OTT, II), chapters A through D, as a unit because they are all designed to show that the relationship of the Old Testament to the New is best understood via the approach already used in the expounding of the Old Testament itself, i.e., the traditio-historical approach.

Everything that follows is really intended simply to carry this familiar procedure a stage further by trying to understand that the way in which the Old Testament is absorbed in the New is the logical end of a process initiated by the Old Testament itself, and that its "laws" are to some extent repeated in this final reinterpretation.¹

The procedure he refers to is the reinterpretation of the old tradition. Of specific importance here is the manner in which the prophets made a radical break with the saving election traditions wherein the traditions became types with predictive character. The prophets expect a new David, a new Exodus, a new covenant, a new Jerusalem. This entire process took place on an eclectic and charismatic basis. Some things were ignored as they receded in the face of the new thing predicted. The prophets have a dialectical relationship with the old traditions, the basis of their authority comes from these traditions, but they also go beyond them giving them new content. While

¹OTT, II, 321. In OTT, II, 411 von Rad writes that each of Yahweh's historical actions seen within the context of kerygma or the confessional aspect was "linked to definite foundations, bases of salvation" that had been instituted in Israel by Yahweh. "Each historical action moved and was to be understood in their shadow." These "foundations themselves [the covenant with the patriarchs, covenant at Sinai, covenant with David and the founding of Zion] already contained definite promises." Furthermore, "the specific historical actions described in the Old Testament indicate a part of the road along which Jahweh manoeuvres history towards a fulfilment of this promise." This aspect von Rad calls "traditio-historical."

the prophets both separate and select the traditions with which they are concerned, these traditions remain the basis of their arguments. Von Rad affirms that this is the same process that took place in the New Testament where the Gospel writers and the Apostles pronounced a new name, Christ the Kyrios, over the old writings. Characteristic of this process is the transfer of the statements in the Septuagint where Yahweh is referred to as Kyrios to Christ, the new Kyrios.¹ The content of the Old Testament took on the characteristic of "pointers" to the coming of Christ, and eventually everything in the Old Testament was understood to refer to Christ. This view of things is dominated by Heilsgeschichte and typology.²

The same process is witnessed in the New Testament's understanding of such Old Testament topics as the world, man and death. Of course Israel's understanding of the world and man are not without variation during her history, but still, basic to determining the Old Testament's importance for Christianity is the idea "that it is in history that God reveals the secret of his person."³ An attempt is made to set forth a sequence of historical events in the course of which God's relation to Israel and the world is given a new footing. Thus the Old Testament has a

¹Von Rad says the objection that the original meaning of the old material is abandoned by this view is groundless because it is impossible to completely separate form and content. "There can be no such thing as an Old Testament form emptied of its content and filled with New Testament material. The question should be put the other way round: How was it possible for the Old Testament traditions, and all the narratives, prayers and predictions, to be taken over by the New Testament?" He answers that "this could not have happened if the Old Testament writings had not themselves contained pointers to Christ and been hermeneutically adapted to such a merger." (OTT, II, 333.) Christ claimed both form and content for himself. The "new faith" in the New Testament required the Old Testament in order to express itself. (OTT, II, 334, 335.)

²OTT, II, 322ff.

³OTT, II, 338.

preparatory function for the New Testament. Of special importance for this thought is the function of language. Von Rad says we should try to understand what connects the two Testaments by a study of their language, i.e., "man's ability to name and describe the data of his existence."¹ Putting the "data of existence" into words presupposes a knowledge of that data. "It can therefore be said that when God began to reveal himself to her [Israel] in history, he also gave her her language."² Of special importance in this respect is the way the Christian community was able to utilize the language of the Old Testament. The New Testament employs Old Testament terms and concepts, but in so doing the faith re-shaped them according to a pattern already established in the Old Testament based upon God's revelation in Israel. The real connection between the Testaments lies in this process, for it is here that the preparatory function of the Old Testament takes shape.³

The language of Israel was minted by faith, and in turn, the faith "was constantly driven forward by specific revelations in history."⁴ But God's self-revelation takes place in history in the form of "words and acts;" furthermore, "history becomes word, and word becomes history."⁵ This apparently means that events or accounts of the history that have no interpreting word attached to them (such as the old Credo) are at a later time spoken of as having been announced by Yahweh. This to some degree interprets them; thus word precedes history, announcing it. But it also follows it, interpreting it. Other historians took up the account in

¹OTT, II, 352.

²OTT, II, 353.

³OTT, II, 354f.

⁴OTT, II, 357.

⁵OTT, II, 358.

new interpretations. The New Testament took up the reinterpretation of the history of Israel on the basis of a new saving event, Jesus Christ. The fact that the Old Testament history was taken up again and again in new interpretations reveals that it was open to the future. This openness to the future is a characteristic of the Old and New Testament alike.¹ The relationship between the Testaments may be seen by recognizing a "'structural analogy'" between the saving events in the Old and New Testaments consisting of an "interconnexion of revelation by word and revelation by event."² The prophet's way of stating the precise time that events transpired in the world gives emphasis to their historical character. Von Rad states that words like "'in the year that King Uzziah or King Ahaz died'" prepare the way for "'suffered under Pontius Pilate.'"³ But the most notable of all analogies is the manner in which God "retreats" from man and in relation to whom they can only exercise faith. Therefore, there is an analogy which is not merely formal. We also have promises, judgments, acts of guidance, etc., which are analogous to the saving acts in the New Testament. Von Rad affirms that the New Testament writers were cognizant of the "forward-looking character of these analogies in the Old Testament," and therefore used the analogies to illuminate the saving event of Christ.⁴ Typology was used to put these correspondences in a "theological frame of reference" so that it could be used in preaching and paraenesis.⁵ Thus, von Rad employs a two-fold method to

¹OTT, II, 359ff. ²OTT, II, 363. ³OTT, II, 363.

⁴OTT, II, 364. See also EOTH, pp. 17ff.

⁵OTT, II, 364.

establish the relation between the Testaments: revelation by word and event, and typology. The latter is important in establishing the similar elements between the Testaments because it was developed by the prophets, in fact it was an essential presupposition of the origin of prophetic prediction.¹ The prophets developed theological discourse in terms of analogy. This was typology based "not on myth and speculation, but on history and eschatology."² By this von Rad means the historical, temporal sequence that became visible in the correspondences between the old tradition and the new event that was analogous to it. The relationship between the Testaments can thus be made on the basis of what is typical, i.e., a "larger context" to which the specific Old Testament phenomena belongs. In this context there is an analogy by which the phenomena can be better understood. What von Rad refers to here is a specific history set in motion by the words and deeds of God which, as the New Testament specifies, sees its goal in Christ. "Only in this event is there any point in looking for what is analogous and comparable."³ Because von Rad presupposes a particular kind of connection between the saving events of the Old Testament and the "transcendent saving events" of the New Testament, i.e., a connection within the historical process itself, a new element is introduced into the interpretation of the Old Testament. This produces a logical progression, the end of which is in the future, although from the point of

¹This special kind of thinking, wherein there was a re-actualization of the historical saving appointments or events is described by von Rad as a typical feature of Yahwism; and because it is the means by which Old Testament material was absorbed into the New, it is "typical of the Biblical understanding of history" (OTT, II, 428).

²OTT, II, 365.

³OTT, II, 369. See also EOTH, p. 36.

view of the Old Testament man this forward looking character is not evident. It is to the man aware of the New Testament saving event that the Old Testament speaks in a new way. He sees the Old Testament events as "prefigurations of Christ's coming."¹

Von Rad's use of typology is not an attempt to objectify Old Testament types; he is only interested in the events between God and Israel and their place in the scheme of promise and fulfillment. One of his primary concerns has been to explain how "from Abraham to Malachi, Israel was kept constantly in motion because of what God said and did, and that she was always in one way or another in an area of tension constituted by promise and fulfillment."²

As a concluding statement:

The chief consideration in the correspondence between the two Testaments does not lie primarily in the field of religious terminology, but in that of saving history, for in Jesus Christ we meet once again--and in a more intensified form--with that same interconnexion between divine word and historical acts with which we are already so familiar in the Old Testament.³

X. Summary

A general summary is in order here to bring together the elements we have selected as of primary importance for von Rad's understanding of history.

1. Von Rad makes a distinction between history reconstructed by historico-critical methods and a history with God, between the original event and the secondary experience. The latter history is drawn up by the combination and interpretation of historical traditions. Although von Rad speaks of historical traditions as being expressive of

¹OTT, II, 371.

²OTT, II, 371.

³OTT, II, 382.

Israel's history, the historical kernel in these traditions is not the object of the tradition's expression. A later experience is described by it. The secondary experience is primary and the original content of the tradition recedes with interpretation. The event reported and the faith it expresses are no longer of the same period.

2. The basic events in the "canonical" Heilsgeschichte, so defined because it is a summary of saving events which form the old historical Credo (Deut. 26:5-9), were fused together in this sequence by means of confessional activity in a central sanctuary. Originally they were unrelated traditions. Because history and cult are inseparable the time factor in this sequence is controlled by its content, i.e., time is the moment of cultic actualization. The sequence does not represent a flow of events in time as perceived in modern categories of history, yet by means of this sequence Israel eventually came to an understanding of linear time. Von Rad's work in and appraisal of the Book of Deuteronomy has influenced his perspective. Here is the strongest evidence for cultic actualization of the history at a later time, and the understanding that Israel stood between promise and fulfillment.
3. The old picture of the Heilsgeschichte was expanded externally by the Yahwist who pushed the time factor back by prefacing it with the primeval history, and internally by incorporating the Sinai tradition. The Heilsgeschichte was set in motion by the employment of the promise to Abraham as a word of God which, instead of referring to the immediate fulfillment in the days of the patriarchs, referred to the fulfillment in the conquest under Joshua. The

means employed to affect this picture were literary, but the historical picture that resulted expressed the historical experience of the Yahwist's faith. However, based on an earlier essay of von Rad's where he considers Joshua 1 as the conclusion of the Yahwist's work, neither the event posited as fulfillment, i.e., the entry under Joshua, nor the time designated as having transpired to the time of the conquest is the actual historical element represented. Both refer to the time of David. Heilsgeschichte in the Yahwist's time has taken on characteristics of hidden guidance, and direct intervention by Yahweh falls into the background. The work of the Elohist is assessed in a similar way.

4. The Priestly Document is a cultic program in the time of the exile whose scope of history is still the same as previous historians, i.e., the events up to the granting of the land and no farther. He manipulates the traditions, deletes and distorts the real state of things in order to show how the ordinances which came about in history up to his time had been products of the Heilsgeschichte. He sees the promises made to the patriarchs fulfilled when Yahweh's glory appeared over the tabernacle.
5. The Deuteronomist's editing of the Book of Joshua demonstrates how he coordinated documents from the time of Josiah with those referring to the period of the Judges in order to show that Yahweh works all Israel. This theological intention allows him to construct conditions during the earlier period that never actually existed. The time between promise and fulfillment here is not between the promise to the patriarchs and the fulfillment under Joshua, but between the time of the patriarchs and the expansion of the empire by Josiah.

6. The Deuteronomistic histories derive their primary theological perspective from the figure of David. Here is a new element, a new saving event, a new impulse in the Heilsgeschichte. This means that traditions formed around David and became the basis of a new historiography. The Deuteronomist begins with the period of the conquest and is guided by his theological concept of the monarchy. The significance of David is not recognized to any degree but only comes to light with this work. Again we see that the Deuteronomist is not concerned with presenting historical fact as modern history sees it. David's call is arbitrarily moved back to his youth. Originally this was not so. The covenant with David is also incorporated into the Succession Document to illustrate the fulfillment of destinies.
7. The Deuteronomistic theology of history is concerned with showing how the Heilsgeschichte came to an end in 722 B.C. and 587 B.C. Events are interpreted in a scheme of promise and fulfillment to demonstrate how God's word as outlined in the Book of Deuteronomy brought Israel into judgment. He incorporates into his work many prophecies that he interprets as having become history, i.e. those that he saw to be fulfilled in judgment. In order to judge the king by the law of Moses he combined the originally independent traditions of Moses and David. Because Deuteronomy demands centralized worship in Jerusalem the kings of the Northern Kingdom with their separate cults are condemned.
8. The Deuteronomist was the first to clearly develop the phenomenon of Heilsgeschichte, a course of history formed and led to a fulfillment by a word of judgment and salvation injected into it.

When we consider the exposition of the Deuteronomistic theology of history Heilsgeschichte as a definition of the old Credo is overshadowed by the theological scheme of promise and fulfillment. A theological scheme has supplanted a more definitional and structural Heilsgeschichte. This is of particular interest because all earlier historico-theological works in the Old Testament are to be interpreted by the theological trend evident in the Deuteronomistic history.

9. The Chronicler built upon the work of the Deuteronomist and schematized the history to fit his theological intentions. Like the picture of the history given by the Deuteronomist the Chronicler's picture differs from that given in the older sources. This is especially true of the picture given of David. He extends the period of the Heilsgeschichte from Adam to after the time of Nehemiah.
10. Because Wisdom and the Psalms do not conform to a theological presentation of the saving acts as well as that built upon the historical traditions they are given a less prominent place, as Israel's answer. Apocalyptic likewise recedes because it has no relationship to the Heilsgeschichte.
11. The prophets believed the Heilsgeschichte as hitherto understood to be at an end. They abolish the old acts making a break with past history. Yet they project the old traditions into the future where they become fulfilled as eschatological saving events analogous to the old saving acts. The traditions serve as words (promises) of the new events.

12. Typological thinking, i.e. the reactualization of the saving events eschatologically, originated with the prophets. This is a typical feature of Yahwism. It was by typological means that the Old Testament material was absorbed into the New Testament, so typology is typical of the biblical understanding of history, and provides the basis for the unity between the Testaments.

In the "Postscript" of Vol. II, von Rad incorporates the major part of a lengthy article¹ which attempted to answer or anticipate questions raised by the earlier German editions of his theology of the Old Testament, and give a clear explanation of the things he said there. He writes that if we seek what is the common feature of all the actualizations in the Old Testament we find that

in one way or another . . . Israel was always placed in the vacuum between an election made manifest in her history, and which had a definite promise attached to it, and a fulfilment of this promise which was looked for in the future.²

Through reactualization of the saving events each generation had to understand itself as Israel. The characteristic thing in all these actualizations was that Israel was positioned between promise and fulfillment, she was led from promise to fulfillment.³

As a final observation, there are three principal concepts present in von Rad's exposition which affect his picture of the Heilsgeschichte, which moves forward to the Christ event in the New Testament: (a) The predominance of event over word or logos; this brings Israel's experiences and their descriptions under the category

¹"Offene Fragen im Umkreis einer Theologie des Alten Testaments," ThLZ, 88 (1964), pp. 402ff.

²OTT, II, 414.

³OTT, II, 414.

of events and not conceptual or rational attempts to understand what happened, it also supports the assessment of Deut. 26:5-9 as bruta facta, without interpretation of any kind; (b) The concept of linear history which grew out of the sequence of events in the old Credo and the constant reinterpretation of the same past events which characterized the Old Testament openness to history; (c) The idea of the movement of history from promise to fulfillment, which not only produces a linear span of time but incorporates it into its understanding of the history.¹

Heilsgeschichte would have the same meaning as Geschichte here: The sequence of events in the scheme of promise and fulfillment. This history is formed and moved by a word of God. In this process the old acts of salvation are actualized and reinterpreted for new generations. This results in wider and wider areas of the history being taken into the sketch. Yahweh works with Israel as a unit. The linear time-span is lengthened, and this desire to carry through a linear time sketch is accomplished by the conception that Israel's history was one under God's guidance. This guidance is composed of the movement of promise and fulfillment.

XI. Conclusion

Von Rad is not concerned with events organically related to one another in a normal time stream as modern history conceives of it. He

¹Von Rad also writes that he wishes he had a different word to use than Heilsgeschichte because of its connections with earlier proponents of the Heilsgeschichte such as the biblicists. He states that the English expression "history of salvation" strikes a fatal blow at the meaning he wishes to convey by the term. The thing which is most important is not the progression from Adam to Christ, but a theological concept in the larger realm of history, with a "saving trend" (heilsgeschichtlichen Trend)--EvTh, 24 (1964), p. 391.

is interested in a sequence of events as they are arranged and interpreted by individual historians in an attempt to delineate experiences in a history with God. This history is formed and set in motion by a word of God and moves from promise to fulfillment as the fulfillment is determined by a historian in his own day. Therefore, it appears correct to say that for von Rad history means a course of events receiving its quality from the tension between promises (prophecies) and their corresponding fulfillments. In other words it is the succession of events in the scheme of promise and fulfillment as determined at a specific moment in Israel's faith.

This is very much like the idea of the Deuteronomistic theology of history; and because twice in articles that anticipated his magnum opus von Rad clearly stated that the earlier historico-theological works in the Old Testament were to be interpreted by the trend found in the Deuteronomist, we feel he has used this scheme to interpret and evaluate the entire Old Testament.¹ It is interesting to note that the Deuteronomist was not interested in outlining a secular history or a history of the faith and worship of Israel.

The dependence of the prophetic message on the Deuteronomistic theology of history is seen in the prophets recapturing the dimension of history and politics for the faith by opening up the future as the place where God will act again. The old traditions are placed with the

¹Our exposition of the Heilsgeschichte in the various documents as it takes the form of events in the scheme of promise and fulfillment supports the observation of M. Honecker, "Zum Verständniss der Geschichte in Gerhard von Rads Theologie des Alten Testaments," EvTh, 23 (1963), pp. 146f. Honecker points out von Rad's contention that the Deuteronomistic theology of history was the first to clearly formulate the Heilsgeschichte, and that von Rad has employed it as an interpretive principle to the whole Old Testament.

help of a creative interpretation into the perspective of a new saving event. Because the eschatological character of the prophetic message negates the old historical basis for salvation the Deuteronomistic theology of history is brought in to maintain a connection with the old Heilsgeschichte. Thus the old acquires prophetic significance and permits God to link on to what he had established. The prophets which most clearly illustrate von Rad's point that the old history had been broken off and that salvation would come in a new form analogous to the old are Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. These are the prophets cited to support his position in the "Methodological Presuppositions." Here in these prophets is the strongest evidence for the abolishing of the old acts of salvation as a place of security (Isa. 43:18f.), and the evidence of something new coming about analogous to the acts of the old Heilsgeschichte. Deutero-Isaiah is very close to his contemporary the Deuteronomist in viewing the course of world history from the perspective of its correspondence to a previous spoken prophetic word. All Heilsgeschichte is history that Yahweh has foretold. The break in the continuity between old and new caused Deutero-Isaiah no trouble because he was aware that the new as well as the old had been foretold long ago, in fact this gave his message its legitimation. His message was legitimized by the "continuity of prediction." This is essentially the same thing von Rad has meant by the movement of promise and fulfillment or prophetic predictions and their corresponding fulfillments. In this the old acts become prophecies of the new, and leave the Old Testament open to the future.

Because von Rad uses the trend in the Deuteronomistic theology of history to interpret the prophetic messages, and it is the prophets

who originate theological discourse in terms of analogy or typology, this trend also determines how von Rad thinks of the connection between the Old and New Testaments. This especially illuminates von Rad's statement about history becoming word and word becoming history. The Deuteronomist incorporated many prophecies into his work which became history. This is already recognized in the work of the Yahwist where the history is set in motion by a word of Yahweh which moves to its goal. Because of this von Rad's dependence upon and his similarity to the Deuteronomistic theology of history is evident.

CHAPTER THREE

VON RAD'S CRITICS AND HIS ANSWER

I. W. Eichrodt

A. Critique of von Rad's Method

Eichrodt opposes von Rad's view which affirms that Old Testament theology is concerned with various selected confessional statements organized around the idea of the people of God but does not allow these statements to become part of a system of belief. This view of von Rad's, which emphasizes the unassociated acts of revelation with no common aim, leads to the conclusion that there cannot be any constant factor in God's relationship with his people.¹

Von Rad needs to recognize, in Eichrodt's opinion, that the variety of Old Testament testimonies results from looking at a complex reality from different angles and does not necessarily imply discontinuity in the revelatory process. There is inner agreement in these testimonies of faith despite their differences and internal tensions, and the common features that bind them together provide a system of belief which in unity of structure and orientation confronts us with something unique in the history-of-religions. Eichrodt implies that it is imperative that one ask what it is that binds the confessions of faith together; for if one does

¹TOT, I, 514.

not, the question of authority and the question of what unites the Testaments are in doubt, and it seems that there will be no way of arriving at an understanding of a "distinctive divine reality."¹ Von Rad's charge that such a method arrives at abstraction is groundless. We are not concerned with creating a corpus of doctrines with a unified intellectual structure; rather, we are concerned with the content of the relationship between God and his people for the faith. Arguing a posteriori to expose a structure of belief is simply the procedure the scientific method demands of us when we attempt to give a description of the content of the sources. Eichrodt points out that von Rad employs this method himself as revealed by the chapter he entitles "Israel's Anointed."

B. Critique of von Rad's Idea of History

Eichrodt is opposed to von Rad's radical separation of the Heilsgeschichte from the historico-critical version of the history. The "rift" we have between these two courses of the history has now been "wrenched apart with such violence" that there is no possible way of restoring any coherent relationship between them.² Von Rad has given the impression that the Old Testament narrators have, by employing poetic license of a religious sort, "dissolved the true history of Israel."³ The acts of God, from the call of the patriarchs onward, are drawn in "flat contradiction of the facts" for the purpose of "extolling" and "glorifying" Israel's God and his saving work.⁴ Eichrodt notes that this poetry does not have its

¹TOT, I, 514.

²TOT, I, 512.

³TOT, I, 513.

⁴TOT, I, 513.

origin in the aesthetic; rather it arises from the "urge" of faith to understand, an urge to "convince itself" of the special relationship God has with his people by devising a Heilsgeschichte. Eichrodt seeks to make it clear that this "spurious factuality" is not to be identified with "historical truth." This factuality applies only to those who are conditioned to "'ask the same sort of questions and accept the same sort of answers.'"¹ This view makes it necessary for anyone who accepts it to separate Old Testament theology from the historico-critical picture of Israel's history. This results in confining Old Testament theology to presenting the relationship of Yahweh to Israel and the world according to the writer's kerygmatic intention.

After focusing on these circumstances it appears impossible to Eichrodt for any "genuine" historical foundation to exist. With the destruction of the Moses tradition we apparently also lose any hope of understanding the historical origin of the Yahweh faith. The idea that Yahwism arose by chance out of the combination of various traditions, springing up at various places, casts doubts not only on the origin of the faith but "all the later historical evidence" in the Old Testament.² This in turn forces Eichrodt to ask whether a religious testimony which has no apparent connection with historical reality can actually be considered adequate evidence for a historical revelation. Even if one credits von Rad with attempting to relate faith to some aspect of history, the effort still appears to be a religious philosophy. It is quite intolerable, according to Eichrodt, to surrender a historical basis for Israel's

¹TOT, I, 513.

²TOT, I, 514.

faith or make such a contrast of the two versions of history in an attempt to show the "unimportance of the historical reference of religious statements."¹ In the Old Testament we are dealing not with an "anti-historical transformation of the course of history into a fairy tale or poem," rather we are concerned with "an interpretation of real events inspired by contact with the mysterious Creatorhood of the God who controls history, and from continual experience of his saving action."² Eichrodt thinks that by means of a "one-sided" or "exaggerated" rendering of an event it is possible to comprehend its true significance better than from a mere chronicle of the course of actual history, for a prophetic element is present in the former. This is different from either "a purely reflective estimate of its own place in the train of events, or from a merely anthropocentric intellectual construction."³ Therefore, we should not exclude the topic of the connection between the testimony of faith and the historical facts from Old Testament theology. This is imperative if we are to understand the claim made by Israel that her faith was founded in the facts of history and was not merely a "mental device for overcoming the problem of history," and having no real authority.⁴ If the Old Testament is concerned with God's encounter with man in history and the fact that through this encounter the people of God were brought into existence, then the main thrust of the Old Testament message must be made up of this fact. In this fellowship God reveals himself to man. The Old Testament understanding of history originates from "the interior overmastering of the

¹TOT, I, 516.

²TOT, I, 516.

³TOT, I, 516.

⁴TOT, I, 517.

human spirit by God's personal invasion."¹ Here we find the "decisive inward event, without which all external facts must become myth."² All further relations with God in history have their source in this event; anything that can possibly be said about his will or action has its origin in this encounter with God.³ In this, Eichrodt shows he believes it necessary and possible to reconcile both versions of Israel's history in the interest of the reliability of the biblical witness.

C. Critique of von Rad's Use of Typology

While defending typological exegesis as a suitable way of understanding the connections between the Testaments,⁴ Eichrodt does not extend this defense to the way von Rad uses typology. Von Rad has imposed "stringent limitations" upon it.⁵ When he speaks of the fulfillment of the Old Testament utterances in the New Testament event, he is not speaking of a "corroboration and development" of a factual kind. There is such discontinuity of the revelatory acts that they cannot be united by intellectual religious connections, and therefore their meaning is perceived in how they prefigure the Christ-event. They are to be understood not in their "mere factuality" but in the way their occurrences lean towards a future fulfillment.⁶

¹TOT, I, 15.

²TOT, I, 15.

³TOT, I, 518.

⁴"Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?," EOTH, pp. 224ff. Typology for Eichrodt is "the designation for a peculiar way of looking at history." Types are "persons, institutions, and events of the Old Testament which are regarded as divinely established models or prerepresentations of corresponding realities in the New Testament salvation history" (p. 225).

⁵TOT, I, 515.

⁶TOT, I, 515. See OTT, II, 384.

Even though von Rad's idea of typology shows the connection between type and antitype in order to explain the significance of religious expressions and institutions on which the relationship between man and God rests, it still is not adequate to encompass what the New Testament means by fulfillment. Fulfillment leads to a historical actuality surpassing the restrictions of analogy that existential interpretation demands. If one wishes to avoid the conclusion that the idea of the Old Testament's openness to the future is merely a statement about man, then one will have to consider the Old Testament's testimony of God leading to a goal, God leading history to its consummation. The idea of the Christian's recapitulation of Israel's experience (OTT, II, 397) cannot be taken as an adequate understanding of the unity of the Testaments merely because this experience finds itself moving towards a final fulfillment. It must be taken "in conjunction with the complementary truth of comprehensive divine new creation" in which the Old Testament Heilsgeschichte achieves its goal.¹

Behind von Rad's exposition is the "conviction that the existentialist interpretation of the biblical evidence is the right one."² He admits that there is no way of confirming his interpretation of the prefigurations leaning towards the future (OTT, I, 387). Interpretation takes place in the eclectic charismatic freedom of the expositor. With this, states Eichrodt, one must give up any idea of a normative interpretation of the Old Testament.³

¹OTT, I, 520.

²OTT, I, 515.

³OTT, I, 515.

II. F. Baumgartel¹

A. Critique of von Rad's Method²

Baumgartel criticizes von Rad on method because in his reaction to a systematic method and his employment of traditio-historical methodology he ends up excluding the "Mitte" from the Old Testament. He, therefore, does not have an adequate idea of revelation. Since we are to follow the ever-new interpretation and actualization of the acts of God until they are adopted and actualized in the New Testament, the description of Israel's constant labor at reinterpretation is emphasized to the point that what is theologically relevant, i.e., God's self-actualization through his tools and his struggle with his people and his messengers, is almost overlooked. Von Rad's theology needs to be more theo-centric.³ God is the Mitte which

¹The principal points in this exposition are taken from "Gerhard von Rad's Theologie des Alten Testaments," ThLZ, 86 (1961), pp. 801-816, 895-908. Cross reference has been made to sources, some bearing earlier dates than von Rad's Theologie des Alten Testaments, from which supplementary material has been taken for purposes of clarification or fuller development of thought briefly alluded to in the above article.

²ThLZ, 86 (1961), pp. 895ff.

³Because von Rad eliminates the Mitte from the Old Testament he finds some difficulty in the Enthronement Psalms and the depiction of theophanies. He does not see God as the Mitte there, so this witness of the Old Testament is impossible for him to incorporate into his basic conceptions. He asserts that "the Enthronement Psalms are the 'least' Israelite poems" (OTT, I, 363). They do not measure up to his controlling criterion of saving events on which the whole existence of Israel rests. These psalms have to recede. But Baumgartel affirms that these psalms are the "most" Israelite of the psalms. Here the cultic community is worshipping before its God. In becoming present, God is the center of all Israel's certainty of faith. From this revelation of God to Israel alone can the Old Testament be addressed theologically and legitimately. Von Rad puts the Mitte in danger but redeems himself by seeing the Mitte as saving acts in the aesthetic sense, the Mitte of which is evasive. The theophany is a great "delectarie," significant in the aesthetic sense (OTT, I, 365). The same applies to the prophets as they gaze on the manifestation of God (ThLZ, 86 [1961], pp. 896f.).

determines everything in the history witnessed to by the individual acts of revelation in the Old Testament; just as Christ is the Mitte of the history in the New Testament running from his birth to the Easter event.¹

When von Rad bases his idea of revelation on historical events alone, in the sense of being connected to occurrences, it clearly shows how difficult it is to attain a comprehensive theological view from an intersection of history-of-traditions and biblical theology. It cannot lead to a fuller theological understanding of the Old Testament as von Rad claims. The idea of revelation von Rad produces cannot in the least allow the Christian dogmatician to do his work; therefore, it is scarcely a decisive step in the theological understanding of the Old Testament. It is impossible for the systematic theologian to find access into the Old Testament by way of von Rad's charismatic, pneumatic, and eclectic interpretation.

B. Critique of von Rad's Idea of History²

Baumgärtel is opposed to the way von Rad covers the whole problem of the Old Testament with his idea of "retelling." He has mistaken it for "proclamation."³ If by "retelling" von Rad means Israel's constant re-

¹A similar argument is put forth by H. Graf Reventlow, "Grundfragen des alttestamentlichen Theologie im Lichte der neueren deutschen Forschung," ThZ, 17 (1961), pp. 93ff. Von Rad responded in ThLZ, 88 (1964), pp. 402ff. (a statement which is included in the English translation--Old Testament Theology--of his theology). Here he denies that "Yahweh" is the center of the Old Testament because one cannot answer the question of what kind of a Yahweh he was; he progressively conceals himself from his people (OTT, II, 415).

²ThLZ, 86 (1961), pp. 903ff.

³Hesse apparently has a similar thought in mind when he calls attention to the similarities von Rad's work has to that done in the New Testament field where not only an act of God is an aid to salvation, but the preaching of that event (ZThK, 57 [1960], pp. 20ff.).

telling of the events, then he comes close to identifying the confessional historical description of the Old Testament with the Christian confession, because von Rad is concerned with the way the church uses the Old Testament. With von Rad's admission that the actual course of the events was not remembered by Israel, what is one supposed to retell? Shall one retell that which never happened as if it were an actual course of events? Or shall one retell the events as creations of faith but which never happened? Here is von Rad's weakness; and, as far as Baumgärtel is concerned, neither this history drawn up by faith nor the historico-critical version of Israel's history is relevant for the Christian faith. In the Old Testament only one thing remains valid for the Christian faith: the "basic promise" (der Grundverheissung), "I am the Lord your God."¹ All else is history-of-religions in its various branches and without relevance for the Christian faith.² Israel's confession of the Heilsgeschichte is a part of the history of Israel's religion with historico-critical investigation underlying it. Von Rad's opposition to the picture unfolded by the historico-critical method rests on the idea that the phenomenon of the faith cannot be explained in a rational and logical way, the picture of the history con-

¹Verheissung. Zur Frage des evangelischen Verständnisses des Alten Testaments (Gütersloh, 1952), p. 20. Hereafter Verheissung.

²Baumgärtel, ThLZ, 86 (1961), pp. 812f., states that theological relevance for von Rad means unifying traditio-historical and religio-phenomenological elements with the Old Testament scheme of promise and fulfillment. This means nothing is left to do but to retell. Fundamentally, the outline von Rad offers was formulated in 1931 by N. Söderblom in the Gifford Lectures (The Living God; Basal Forms of Personal Religion [London, 1933], Baumgärtel cites the German ed., Der lebendige Gott im Zeugnis der Religionsgeschichte [1942], pp. 300f.). Söderblom states that Israel's faith was attached to particular historical facts which God offered for the salvation of Israel. God's authority was revealed in definite occurrences as nowhere else. In addition they are constantly reinterpreted,

structed by faith cannot be the object of religio-historical investigation. The object of the investigation is not the faith but the product of the faith, the confessional description of the history. Equating faith and the witness of the faith as phenomenon makes the work of history-of-religions appear impossible. The Christian theological approach is the essential tool for theology. It is not concerned with questions of Israel's religion, but with the content of the Christian faith. Israel's faith, from which springs all witness and confession of the Old Testament and from which each picture of the history constructed by faith comes, is not the Christian faith.¹ The Old Testament is a witness out of a strange religion, a religion outside the Gospel. It has a different self-understanding than the "evangelical prior understanding." The Old Testament Word has "power" for Christians only by exposing the religio-historical conditioning and development of its witness, but this is external to the Gospel and has now power as "evangelical Word."²

This pronounced emphasis on the New Testament is obviously depreciatory of the Old Testament and the Old Testament Heilsgeschichte. Baum-

which is a bit of phenomenology-of-religions. The same observations were made in 1933 by G. van der Leeuw in Phänomenologie der Religion, pp. 533f. For von Rad a promise fulfilled becomes a new promise; everything depends on the "saving efficacy" of the old acts. New interpretations arise out of thinking about faith. But if the theological relevance of the Old Testament is not rooted in historical facts which Israel experienced in the self-disclosure of God, then everything is history-of-religions, phenomenology-of-religions and history-of-piety.

¹Verheissung, pp. 7ff.; C. Westermann, "Remarks on the Thesis of Bultmann and Baumgärtel," EOTH, pp. 128ff.

²Baumgärtel, "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Old Testament," EOTH, p. 135.

gürtel, accordingly, offers seven statements¹ for the understanding of the Old Testament Heilsgeschichte:

1. The Heilsgeschichte is: "The Word became flesh." We experience the Historie of Jesus in faith, together with the early church, as the judgment and salvation of God which becomes actual to us, as the realization of a community living with him.
2. The Old Testament event is understood from the Christ-event. It belongs in this Word become flesh. It can only be understood as an event of the Heilsgeschichte from the point of Christ and the New Testament. It cannot be conceived as such from the Old Testament.
3. We experience the Old Testament witness to the Old Testament events by faith in Christ's salvation, as a witness to the Christ-event. We experience our existence before God being put in question and being confirmed.
4. For faith the Old Testament event is not concerned with an outer course of events but with an inner event which God brings about in Israel, in and with the outer event.
5. This inner event is a tangible historical (historisch) event. It is reflected in the testimony of faith through those to whom it has been fully manifested, those who have become affected in their whole existence.
6. Theologically, it is as necessary to understand and describe the Old Testament event as an event of the Heilsgeschichte as it is for the Christian to

¹"Das alttestamentliche Geschehen als heilsgeschichtliches Geschehen," Geschichte und Altes Testament (Tübingen, 1953), pp. 13f. Cf. EOTH, pp. 134ff.

look upon and experience his Savior in faith together with Israel under the Old Testament witness.

7. In order to understand and describe the Old Testament event as an event of the Heilsgeschichte, theology will have the task of describing the Old Testament in its self-understanding, the history of faith, or the history-of-piety. In this respect it is concerned with history as a causal unity. It will describe the testimony of faith concerning the Old Testament man's experience of the events of judgment and grace. This is the history of acceptance or rejection of the absolute promise which God makes to his people. It will also describe in what way that which concerns them concerns us under the Gospel, or the evangelical understanding.

C. Critique of the Movement of History¹

Baumgärtel's criticism of von Rad's comments on the movement of Israel's history centers on the former's insistence that the Old Testament Heilsgeschichte is concerned with "inner" events. In addition to von Rad's statements directly concerned with the subject of this movement as promise to fulfillment, Baumgärtel includes von Rad's statements concerned with the founding of the faith of Israel on a few divine acts of salvation² and the effort to understand them ever anew³ (although in doing this Baumgärtel slightly distorts the context of these two statements). In von Rad's work God is portrayed as placing these saving events in his people's history.

¹ThLZ, 86 (1961), pp. 806ff. ²OTT, I, vi.

³OTT, I, 118f.

He is the moving force behind the Heilsgeschichte, and the historical events are set in motion. But if the constant "effort" to gain understanding does not belong to the movement of the Heilsgeschichte, then von Rad has excluded the inner events from its unfolding.

Of particular concern to Baumgärtel is von Rad's treatment of the movement of history in the prophetic books. He cites von Rad's belief that God's acts of salvation are proclaimed in the movement of history (he refers to Cyrus here) and that the prophets each stand at the place where God's dealings have been almost "stationary," but which "suddenly and dramatically begin to move again."¹ Baumgärtel affirms that the work of the prophet arises through the initiation of the movement of history by God and this moves the Heilsgeschichte. But he then concludes that when one tries to understand how this happens the only answer to be found is: so that the prophets can demolish the old and project the old traditions into the future. However, in this projection no historical facts are effected, no events of the history constructed by faith. It is the faith that comes dramatically into motion. This is a projection from within and, therefore, an event brought into motion from within. In other places² in von Rad's work, God does not bring the world history and with it the prophets into motion, but it is the prophet's intervention that "change the gears of history with a word of God."³ Baumgärtel insists that when von Rad says that Heilsgeschichte is "a course of history which was shaped and led to a fulfilment by a word of judgment and salvation continually injected into

¹OTT, II, 298.

²OTT, I, 293, 342.

³OTT, I, 342.

it,"¹ we must exegete it with reference to "from Abraham to Malachi, Israel was kept constantly in motion because of what God said and did," and was always "in one way or another in an area of tension constituted by promise and fulfilment."² By the use of "in one way or another," accuses Baumgärtel, von Rad allows everything to hang in suspense. One has to know the manner in which Israel was in this area of tension. Is it not in an inner as well as an outer tension? Or, he asks, is it in a tension of faith? According to von Rad, the inner event is not in any way involved with an understanding of the Heilsgeschichte. When von Rad states that Israel was "called by God into a special relationship with himself," a relationship which "received its impetus from repeated promises directed towards fulfilments becoming always more universal in scope,"³ he doesn't say, complains Baumgärtel, where the movement of Israel is, in which area, and how the event of salvation that proceeds from God is finally accomplished. This must be clear. One cannot operate with the idea of movement in theological discourse when what is embodied in the movement is obscure. Von Rad still has to inform us what is in motion, if under all circumstances one is to understand the text of the Old Testament from the "movement" the way he proposes. Because von Rad does not admit of any movement in the heart, he sees no inner event. But what does he mean when he says, "in this intercourse with Jahweh Israel was revealed to herself,"⁴ if this has no relationship to the Heilsgeschichte? Baumgärtel protests against von Rad not bringing persons elected by God into the discussion. Von Rad

¹OTT, I, 344.

²OTT, II, 371.

³OTT, II, 383.

⁴OTT, I, 356.

speaks theologically in schemata. The revelation of God is accomplished in the human soul, an inner event. Von Rad's comment that the human heart is the field where this control of history operates¹ is describing an inner event. The relationship of the message of the prophets to the events in world history is also "within" the prophets. The facts of the divine occurrences related to the prophetic message are also inner facts. If in the Old Testament, as in the New, the offer of salvation confronted men with the question of obedience,² and this is a fact of the Heilsgeschichte, is not this accomplished from "within" man? Deuteronomy has something that appeals to the heart.³ Here, again, we are concerned with the "inner." When von Rad says that "Faith had so mastered the material that the history could be seen from within, from the angle of faith,"⁴ the inner character shows through again, states Baumgärtel; we may also consider: "a picture fashioned throughout by faith,"⁵ and the history "drawn up by faith."⁶

Baumgärtel seeks answers to the following questions:⁷ Is the outer world history set in motion by God,⁸ or do the prophets put the gears of history into motion again?⁹ Is the entire Heilsgeschichte set in motion by a two-fold promise as a word of God,¹⁰ or through Yahweh's addressing Israel anew,¹¹ namely God's word which is injected into history? What does von Rad mean when he says that the Heilsgeschichte is moved by the injection of

¹OTT, I, 316.

²OTT, I, 196.

³OTT, I, 232.

⁴OTT, I, 302.

⁵OTT, I, 302.

⁶OTT, I, 107.

⁷References in this discussion are to pages in von Rad's work cited by Baumgärtel.

⁸OTT, II, 305.

⁹OTT, I, 342.

¹⁰OTT, I, 170.

¹¹OTT, I, 304.

God's word? What is it injected into? Is it into the way they thought about faith or into the theological understanding? This would be an inner relationship which von Rad forbids. What does it mean that Israel was continually kept in suspense by God's hidden acts in history? Is the movement to be sought in the continuous promise and its corresponding fulfillment? This movement is contained in the history which has been constructed by faith and thus accomplished in an act of faith and not in outer events. Or should one look for the continuous movement in the effort to gain an ever new understanding of the believed facts of salvation in which there was an effort to make the old actions relevant for the present day? But there again, states Baumgärtel, one is involved in the confession, and so in the inner history of Israel. The idea of being in "continual motion" is indefinable. Even the accumulations of traditions are in "a state of constant flux."¹ Baumgärtel argues that one is not even allowed to question what this has to do with the continuous movement of world history by God, or what this has to do with the continuous movement of the ever new interpretation of the combined old facts of salvation. Nor is it clear what this has to do with the acts of God which continually hold Israel in suspense. He can see no relationship between these differing aspects of the constant movement. He states that one can quickly come to a basic thesis for this material: However much God's historical acts are retained, everything testifies to the living God keeping his elect in suspense. But von Rad completely dismisses this understanding of the Old Testament Heilsgeschichte, so what remains is that "in one way or another" Israel "was kept constantly

¹OTT, I, 112.

in motion."¹ With this "one way or another" von Rad has removed every intellectual connection. To facilitate his situation he has left the reader in a state of helplessness.

Along similar lines Baumgärtel objects to von Rad's idea of the "saving worth" (Heilskräftigkeit) of the old divine acts (göttlichen Setzungen). He points out that in one place von Rad states that the prophets proclaim to their contemporaries that the "saving ordinances" (Heilssetzungen) have lost their saving worth and, in another place, says they deny the saving worth of the "divine actions" (göttlichen Setzungen) for their contemporaries.² Baumgärtel states that from the perspective of the prophets the old acts were principally not efficacious for salvation but were constantly renewed statements of Israel's election. Then, he points out, there was the cultic actualization of the divine acts in which the participant had a part in Israel's election through actualized salvation. This is where the eighth-century prophets denied the saving worth of the old ordinances. The security given by the election traditions is cancelled by Israel's guilt.³

Baumgärtel shows that von Rad extends the denial of the saving worth of the old ordinances not only to the cultic actualization but also to the statements of Israel's election. This thesis is impossible, but it makes the saving worth of the old acts appear to be suspended. All at once, not only are the ever new actualizations of the old ordinances without saving worth, but the acts themselves. Now, suddenly, the old acts of Yahweh are no longer relevant and a passionate demolition of the old by the prophets follows. The only relevance the old events now have is in their signifi-

¹OTT, II, 371. ²TAT⁶, I, 142, 9; OTT, I, 128, vii. ³OTT, II, 117.

cance as prophecy. The old actions are now projected into the future where in the sense of antitype they become fulfilled and again come to possess saving worth. By mixing the ideas of the old acts as statements of Israel's renewed election and the cultic actualization of the divine acts by the idea of saving efficacy, von Rad develops this impossible thesis out of the possible one, i.e., the prophets abolished the old divine ordinances in their cultic actualization. The mingling of these ideas accounts for the impossible statement in von Rad's work: "Israel's old confession of faith is present now only as something which is done away with."¹ Here, the confession is done away with, not the subject of the confession, "since Jahweh is about to act along the lines of his earlier saving acts in an even more splendid way."² The acts are certainly not done away with. Von Rad must mean that the old divine acts are only present as abolished. Then, an old confession cannot be present as one which is done away with. But von Rad certainly permits the old past acts to be present in their new interpretation as type and antitype, their significance as prophecy. Baumgärtel states that this idea of the saving work of the old acts which when denied bring the acts into an indefinable suspension but when fulfilled as antitype come to again possess saving worth is one of von Rad's main points. With this idea von Rad has done what was not thought possible according to the first volume of his theology, i.e., the linkage of the prophetic traditions with the historical traditions. After reading the first volume, one wonders how von Rad will include the facts of salvation, history-of-traditions, and constant new interpretations and actualization of the old

¹OTT, I, 127.

²OTT, I, 127.

facts in the prophets. They certainly affirm God's acts of salvation, but how will von Rad demonstrate the constant actualization of these traditions with their saving force in the prophets? The answer comes in the second volume where, with the use of the idea that the old actions are abolished for the prophets, it follows that their actualization is no longer possible. The old is projected into the future and the old actions occur again as analogous acts. Baumgärtel reflects that von Rad has moved over a tremendous difficulty with the help of his hazy idea of "saving worth." He then asks in what way the old acts can really be done away with for the prophets when they never have denied them as divine history. He says that von Rad suppresses this question in order that the actualization of the divine acts in the sacral sphere might be shown to be on the wane; and, therefore, all at once the divine acts are depreciated because they have no saving force. At the same time, the prophets understand these old occurrences as divine acts, not in the typological sense with a view to the antitype in the future, but in the actual sense. Von Rad must have their significance depreciate by being abolished, only then is the coming phenomenon of eschatology brought into continuity with what has been a sketch of the Heilsgeschichte. This sketch has been unavoidably linked with the history-of-traditions and the history of interpretation. Through the prophets, Israel must be expelled from the safety of the old saving acts. Von Rad must extract the old saving acts out of the past, declaring them abolished, and project them as new acts into the future. Only in this way could they preserve their saving worth which had been lost. This means that they had lost only the actualization of their saving worth. So, points out Baumgärtel, with the help of this concept--which has a double meaning--von Rad

conceives of and explains the new eschatology of his history-of-traditions approach. But he is also helped by losing the substance of it. Such an arrangement of eschatology signifies then that the old acts were only relevant in the antitypical sense. As facts of the Heilsgeschichte they were cancelled. The prophets exclude the people from these divine acts; and they are now only relevant as being abolished.

Von Rad's determination of eschatology by his traditio-historical-analogical sketch does not necessarily lead to the phenomenon of eschatology at all. The analogies remain untouched even with another explanation of the origin of eschatology. Even the history-of-traditions is not the key. In this whole complex von Rad works from an impasse.

Along with other criticisms of von Rad's idea of history, Baumgärtel is skeptical of his idea that the time of the exile was devoid of Heilsgeschichte. He holds that God is always with his people and his promise of election is always valid. There is no standstill in the divine history, no time without Heilsgeschichte. With his "traditio-historical-salvation-historical" scheme, von Rad has sacrificed the dynamic of the living God. God's dynamic is an uninterrupted work of creating salvation in Israel. Von Rad brings the old acts to an end with the new interpretation, and thus the Heilsgeschichte is at a standstill. This means then that for von Rad salvation is only in the actualization of the old facts. He allows his history-of-traditions scheme to influence the idea of Heilsgeschichte. For him, Heilsgeschichte is present only where the old facts are experienced as efficacious for salvation. Accordingly, von Rad is able to connect the statements of judgment by Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah to the standstill in history. And so the old actions unfold that saving

force again in the antitypical sense, which was the only way open "to the prophets of making material statements about a future which involved God."¹ This scheme preserves the future, which involves God, for the prophets. Baumgärtel retorts that this is an "incomprehensible, unbiblical" idea. By means of demolishing the old, necessitated by the traditio-historical-salvatio-historical scheme, the old is no longer efficacious for salvation. By this is accomplished, antitypically and backwards, the link with the pre-exilic history with God, and forwards with the future with God. The idea of Heilsgeschichte cannot be unfolded by means of a history-of-traditions scheme in which the time of judgment can be eliminated from the history with God. Heilsgeschichte cannot be understood by means of the history-of-traditions. This Heilsgeschichte is still Formgeschichte.

D. Critique of Typology²

Baumgärtel rejects typological exposition on general critical grounds, although it was natural for the New Testament to use it. It is contrary to both our understanding of methodology and history. Historical criticism has shown that the Old Testament picture of history is a distortion which has lost its factual nature. If the Old Testament facts are not really facts, then the Old Testament Heilsgeschichte is not Heilsgeschichte. Heilsgeschichte is historical. If one ascribes a second sense to Old Testament actions, which von Rad does, then one takes the Old Testa-

¹OTT, II, 299.

²ThLZ, 86 (1961), pp. 902f., 905ff. See also Baumgärtel, "Erwägungen zur Darstellung der Theologie des Alten Testaments," ThLZ, 76 (1951), pp. 257ff.; and EOTH, pp. 142ff., for fuller treatment of typology.

ment actions out of the Old Testament context and eliminates the historical aspect. Baumgärtel must have inner connections with historical genetic elements in which the witnessing of God acting in Christ are included. He accuses von Rad of "atomizing" history with his method. History demands inner organic-logical connections. The typological interpretation forgets that the Old Testament words are an acting of God with Old Testament man, with us too, but first with the Old Testament man. The process of God's self-revelation in the people cannot be a sequence of types--i.e., a sequence of abstractions meaningful to New Testament people but not available to Old Testament man. To him, they couldn't mean a moment of decision. They haven't got anything to do with Heilsgeschichte. In Old Testament history, it is promises, not prefigurations, that become clearer and more forceful. In them the temptation grows in Israel to evade God, who is becoming more transparent. Baumgärtel asks where this process could fit into the prefiguration theory. He asserts that the method of typology is an appeal to reason and doesn't make God's presence felt; therefore, it cannot contribute to an elaboration of the Heilsgeschichte. It is an attempt to make a reality out of the Old Testament which will be effective for Christians when modern research has shown that history to be a distortion. What can we see prefigured in an earlier fact which either never happened or never happened as reported? In addition to these arguments, the Old Testament concept of history is unacceptable because its concept of salvation is different from what it is in the New Testament. In the Old Testament it is cultic and national; in the New Testament the emphasis is on salvation by the guidance of the Gospel. Heilsgeschichte has a different content in each situation. It follows that if the Old Testament is a witness

from a foreign religion, a historical understanding of Old Testament piety is insufficient to provide theological relevance for the Christian.¹

Von Rad holds that the Old Testament becomes a prophecy of the New and that what we see in the New Testament may also be seen prefigured in the Old. But, Baumgärtel points out, von Rad is not very definite as to what is prefigured or foreshadowed. For instance, what does he mean by "etwas wie" in the story of Joseph. What is this "something which" reaches beyond the events in the story?² Baumgärtel denies that these events are prophecy. To prophecy belongs what is prophesied; men belong to prophecy. This does not allow an event to become transparent by looking back on it from the antitype. If it was not prophecy to the Old Testament man, it is not prophecy to us. He considers the idea of prophesying types to be an impossible idea. Because von Rad is so deeply rooted in this idea, he adds "promise" to it as an interchangeable element. From this he adds what can only be seen as promise to the concept of prophecy.³

Because of the way von Rad promotes the type, Baumgärtel doubts that his work can be called a theology in a scientific sense. For instance, the

¹Cf. Verheissung, pp. 69, 75, 111ff.; and Geschichte und Altes Testament, pp. 13ff.

²ThLZ, 86 (1961), p. 905.

³Baumgärtel insists that a distinction be kept between promise and prophecy. God's promise remains basic and has absolute value and certainty. Prophecy is man's word; men prophesy, but God promises (Geschichte und Altes Testament, pp. 20ff.; Verheissung, pp. 23ff.). Hesse basically agrees; with the fulfillment of a prophecy it is finished, but the promise remains valid (Das Alte Testament als Buch der Kirche [Gütersloh, 1966], pp. 69ff., 82). We should note the way von Rad interchanges and combines the terms: "prophecies" (OTT, I, 340), "prophetic promises" (EOTH, p. 27), and "promises" (EOTH, p. 28). See C. Westermann's comment on the vague and ambiguous state these terms have come to in the German speaking world (OTCF, pp. 200f.).

Joseph story is said to prefigure the passion of Christ. Baumgärtel believes this cannot be established by cognitive means. It cannot be used because it is not logical. It is a non-concept, and von Rad moves the reader over a difficulty which he sees himself. This charismatic-eclectic interpretation of the foreshadowing of Christ is not rationally constructed.

III. F. Hesse¹

A. Critique of von Rad's Method

Hesse does not object to von Rad's traditio-historical method, but he does question what von Rad has accomplished theologically by it. Theology is a function of the Christian faith, and the witness of the New Testament is constitutive for that faith. Von Rad has worked out a history of Israel's piety with his traditio-historical method; therefore, no theological statement has been made. But what von Rad has accomplished substantiates something that Hesse affirms in contradiction to von Rad's stated conviction that there must be a separation between religio-historical work and Old Testament theology.

The basic thesis of Hesse is that the investigation of the history of Israel's religion is a theological problem. Hesse observes that in von Rad's exposition of the significance of the Old Testament the attempt to draw a dividing line between the history of Israel's religion and the theological meaning has been unsuccessful. Von Rad has constructed an antithesis which actually does not exist. One can hardly separate the history

¹Principal points in this exposition are taken from "Kerygma oder geschichtliche Wirklichkeit?," ZThK, 57 (1960), pp. 17ff., and "Die Erforschung der Geschichte Israels als theologische Aufgabe," KuD, 4 (1958), pp. 1-19, supplemented with additional points of Hesse's views from "The Evaluation and Authority of the Old Testament Texts," EOTH, pp. 285ff.

of Israel's religion and the history of her piety as alien tasks from the proper task, the delineation of the kerygma. The way that Israel described her history, or bore witness to it, is a part of Israel's world of faith and belongs to the history of Israel's piety. This is actually what von Rad has accomplished, and it is difficult for Hesse to understand how von Rad can consider it as the sole legitimate theological undertaking. An analogous example from any other religion is sufficient to illustrate that the dividing line between history-of-religions and theology cannot be drawn.

The scholar will view the way that the religious person believed, saw, described, and related the work of the deity in a manner which he believes appropriate for himself. He will see it as belonging to the world of faith, to the history-of-piety of the religion concerned. It would be unintelligible to a person belonging to a particular religion should someone construct an antithesis between the world of faith of the religion and the way the person who belonged to it described the history of his people as the work of the deity. Therefore, the way Israel's faith bore witness to Yahweh's works in history belongs to the history of Israel's piety. The working out of the Old Testament kerygma is nothing more than a part of religio-historical work, although a very important part.¹

¹Hans Conzelmann, "Fragen an Gerhard von Rad," *EvTh*, 24 (1964), p. 115, has pointed out to von Rad that he failed to provide an answer to these accusations and questions of Hesse and Baumgärtel. He criticizes von Rad himself on the same issues. Recalling von Rad's plea that the last part of his work in Vol. II of his *Old Testament Theology* should not be read in isolation from the former part (*OTT*, II, vi.), he points out that von Rad is applying controls, and if one cannot take stock of the Old Testament without reading the last part of this work then we have been given a history of Israel's religion.

B. Critique of von Rad's
Idea of History

Hesse is unwilling to allow the radical separation of the two pictures of the history. In this he has the support of Johannes Hempel¹ and Victor Maag.² Hesse protests von Rad's position which can present a critical, secular picture of Israel's history, yet submit that it is not this version but the kerygmatic version, largely produced by the post-exilic community, that concerns us theologically. It is not the erroneous picture of the history constructed by faith that is theologically important for the Christian, according to Hesse, but the "actual" course of Israel's history. The "incorrect" kerygmatic version is not basic to our faith, but "historical reality" is.³ For the sake of the truth, affirms Hesse, it should no longer be possible to preach about the New and Old Testament events as if they took place as they are recorded to have happened. We must not combine God's dealings with Israel in the Heilsgeschichte with the actual history. The Bible writers may have regarded it to have happened that way, but modern research presents a different picture. God's history with Israel climaxing in Jesus Christ is to be sketched where history actually took place, not where one can point to particular places where it was perceived to have occurred and which are possibly incorrect. Hesse warns that one casts doubt on the plan of salvation if a view of history is allowed that

¹"Alttestamentliche Theologie in protestantischer Sicht heute," BO, 15 (1958), pp. 212ff.

²"Historische und ausserhistorische Begründung alttestamentlicher Theologie," STU, 29 (1959), pp. 6ff.

³ZThK, 57 (1960), pp. 24f.

rests on the false assumption that what did not happen is acceptable theologically. Therefore, contends Hesse, the history drawn up by the historico-critical method is the only one which is theologically relevant. Hesse almost seems to identify the critical version of the history with the Heilsgeschichte. Heilsgeschichte is present in what the people of Israel "experienced" during its long existence, in what it "did" and "suffered."¹ This Heilsgeschichte doesn't take place side-by-side with Israel's history, nor lie on a higher level; and even though it isn't the same as the history of Israel, it is still there. We can thus say that "in," "with," and "beneath" the history of Israel God leads the Heilsgeschichte to the telos Jesus Christ, that is, "in," "with," and "beneath" what "happens," what actually occurred.² There can be no separation between the history of Israel and the Heilsgeschichte. Heilsgeschichte is present in a "hidden" form in, with, and beneath the history of Israel.³ One cannot regard the internal events as primary and the external events as secondary. Therefore the total history of Israel--all aspects of it--is the subject of theological research, because the Heilsgeschichte which has its climax in Christ is hid in the history of Israel.⁴

¹KuD, 4 (1958), p. 10. ²KuD, 4 (1958), p. 10. See also EOTH, p. 294.

³KuD, 4 (1958), p. 13. .

⁴Expressing similar opinions to that of Hesse are J. Hempel and V. Maag. Hempel distinguishes between the "subjektiv menschliche Welt" and what actually took place. This subjective human world underscores the possibility of error; and if the picture of Moses which von Rad sketches is so far removed from reality, then it should be included under the idea of "irrenden Glaubens" (erring faith). It should not be included where the event is brought about by God, but where the detached report of it appears to be a falsification of the reality (BO, 15 [1958], p. 213). V. Maag, STU, 29 (1959), expresses his distrust of the process of building traditions. He polemicizes against the "Pragmatismus" (p. 13), the "Gott Spielregeln unterschiebt, nach denen er in der geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit nie gehandelt hat" (p. 14). He accuses the Deuteronomist of a pious "Lüge" (p. 13) which

C. Critique of von Rad's
Use of Typology

For Hesse, the Christian's relationship to the Old Testament is a "broken one"; the New Testament has a higher status than the Old. Von Rad, Hesse feels, has not addressed himself sufficiently to the question, Do both Testaments have the same rank? Von Rad seems to proceed on this assumption, but he is silent on the question. According to von Rad Yahweh, who is witnessed to in the Old Testament kerygma, is the same God as in the New Testament. For that reason, the word of God in the Old Testament is perceptible in the same way as in the New Testament kerygma. If both Testaments are witnesses to the word of God coming out of history, then both are to be handled alike methodologically. While Hesse feels von Rad is right in stressing that God is the same in both Testaments, yet the relation between the Testaments is broken because the Old Testament addresses Israel, not us. Any analogies between the Testaments are broken on this fact. The idea that the only consequence for the theology of the text lies in the single analogy of the Christ-event to the facts and the course of history created by God to be interpreted by typology is almost an admission that all of von Rad's tremendous work has been frittered away in tracing the kerygmatic intention of the text.¹

Hesse is not opposed to the kerygmatic description of the Old Testament, but he places a condition on it. The Old Testament and the New

misled the people. These things which stand behind the text conceal the direct religious overmastering of the real historical acts of God. Maag states that one promotes "terminologischen Unfug" when calling the form whose original content does not remain the same due to ever wider expansion ("zerredete Form") by the designation of witness of God's acts (p. 17).

¹ZThK, 57 (1960), pp. 20ff.

are similar in that they testify to a Heilsgeschichte. The Old testifies to a history of promise, the New to its goal--Christ. But the question of something analogous between them is problematic. In the Old Testament the redemptive activity which moves toward Christ is composed of events, not one of which is inaccessible to historical research. The redemptive activity of God in the New Testament, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is beyond the tools of historical research. Historical research into the way Old Testament history was developed may prepare the way for the believer to recognize God's acts, although this research cannot produce such recognition. But historical research is helpless to prepare the way for faith in Christ's resurrection. This faith depends on the witness to a revelation which is not accessible to ordinary historical experience. For this reason the Christian faith is based on the witness of the New Testament. This does not hold for the Old Testament. The Old Testament witness does not agree with the actual course of history, and God's redemptive activity in the Old Testament is dependent on this concept of history. This and the differences between the redemptive activities in both Testaments produce a brokenness of their relationship. The New Testament says the acts happened as they testify. This makes divergencies minor. The New Testament witness has inherent power of persuasion, and therefore is of immediate concern to us, but this is not so with the Old Testament. The Old Testament presents a stumbling block because of the questionable historical facts it sets forth.¹

¹EOTH, pp. 297ff. Cf. ZThK, 57 (1960), p. 25.

IV. Th. C. Vriezen¹

A. Critique of von Rad's Method

Vriezen does not object to von Rad's method of research, but feels that his approach should not exclude other forms of Old Testament theology. Von Rad's concern for separate traditions and their forms causes him to lose interest in what unites them. Stressing the divergent historical testimonies results in overlooking the unity which is characteristic of the Old Testament witness. Even if there is some truth in stressing that there are different theologies in the Old Testament, God is basically the same. If von Rad excludes Yahweh as the center of the Old Testament, this perhaps implies a theological conception in which Christ is seen as the center of the Old Testament message. Von Rad does not relate the kerygmatic aspect of the Old Testament in its parts, but he does pay attention to the connection between the Testaments. This causes Vriezen to wonder if these connections really arose from the "tradition theology" or whether von Rad's concern with the connections determines the latter.²

B. Critique of von Rad's Idea of History

Vriezen feels that von Rad has made such a one-sided evaluation of the history in the form of traditions that it becomes the "source of knowledge of God."³ Because history is so central to the Old Testament, yet so nearly divorced from historical fact, it is as much a concept as other

¹We include Vriezen among the critics because of the lengthy notes concerning von Rad added in his 1970 revision of An Outline of Old Testament Theology (Oxford).

²Ibid., pp. 42, 105, 147.

³Ibid., p. 152.

categories originating in Christian theology. Von Rad's idea that the prophets broke with the past Heilsgeschichte is unacceptable. His position on the lack of organic connection between the message of the prophets and the ancient Israelite conception of history is untenable. Vriezen bases his argument on the following points: (a) The prophets are concerned with the conversion of people in their day; (b) The message of Deutero-Isaiah and the expectations of the prophets relative to the house of David and Jerusalem do not support this break; (c) Prophetic tendencies have affected the historical books; and (d) Literary criticism shows that the oldest traditions were revised by the hand of E and later Yahwistic authors.¹

C. Critique of von Rad's
Use of Typology

Vriezen does not deny the importance of the typological method because it rests upon situations in the Old Testament that have similarities with those in the New Testament, but it should not be applied to all texts like a "divining-rod." This would make each Testament merely the reflection of the other.² He is critical of von Rad, who does not treat the theological maximum critically but seeks merely to pass it on. He sides with Hesse in this respect, while accusing him of pronouncing the "sharpest theological strictures" on the Old Testament message because of his obsession with historical accuracy.³ Vriezen does not approve of von Rad's singular employment of typology to unite the Testaments because the Old Testament material has too much variety for it. Von Rad is, therefore, too narrow with his

¹Ibid., pp. 82, 200, 252.

²Ibid., p. 97.

³Ibid., p. 99.

methodology which is a connecting scheme imposed on the Heilsgeschichte.

One must beware of typology as a "theological ground plan."¹ If we want to understand the relation between the Testaments, we must not confine ourselves to one method, but must be open to a variety of methods. The Bible is too rich in divine-human relations to confine ourselves to one single method such as typology.

V. Von Rad's Reaffirmation²

Von Rad's response to his critics centers mainly around his refusal to make our modern understanding of history a guide for evaluating Israel's account of her history. Modern Historie can do nothing with the idea of "election,"³ which is of such fundamental significance for the Old Testament concept of history, or with the idea of Yahweh's "self-revelation by word and action."⁴ With our modern understanding of history we can deal with the large historico-theological works of the Old Testament and obtain information accessible only to our modern historical perspective. But the word of God and his historical acts, which are the principal things remaining in the old texts, cannot be considered under it. These things are instantly falsified because they have been put within the horizon of a foreign principle of judging. Whoever is concerned with Israel's piety and its changes

¹Ibid., p. 136.

²The response to his critics is found implicitly and explicitly in several places after the criticism were launched: ThLZ, 88 (1963), pp. 402ff. (reproduced with modifications in "Postscript," OTT, II, pp. 410ff.); TAT, II, 8ff.; and EvTh, 24 (1964), pp. 388ff. The answer to his critics appeared in the first edition of TAT, II (1960), but was later deleted so that it did not find its way into the English translation. TAT⁵, II, 437ff., contains a reworked statement of much of the same material found in the other sources cited.

³EvTh, 24 (1964), p. 392.

⁴OTT, II, 418.

or the principal ideas of Israel's religion can yield to the modern historian. But things are different when one sets the very self-confident conception in the Old Testament against modern Historie, which only with great difficulty is made compatible with it. Von Rad thinks less about the differences in the description of the outer process than on the very deep differences in the conception of the factors at work in the history. Because von Rad does not believe it legitimate to take Israel's account of the history out of its specific horizon of understanding, he is unwilling to be forced away from the view of the kerygmatic picture. This is why he wants to interfere with it as little as possible, but on the contrary to gain what he can from it. Von Rad does not want to replace modern ways of thinking about history with the Old Testament idea of history, but he means that the Old Testament can better succeed in helping theologians in today's insecurity and confusion in thinking about history when they bring the Old Testament's understanding of history into the conversation instead of bringing it into line with the modern way of thinking.¹ Von Rad hopes that the Old Testament way of thinking about history will itself "force theologians to reconsider the concept of history."² This does not discredit modern Historie, but the idea of the fundamental facts does not help us gain a proper understanding of the Old Testament since there we have history only in the form of reflection and interpretation.³ In the traditional

¹EvTh, 24 (1964), pp. 392f.

²OTT, II, 387. In fact, von Rad states that faith in Christ needs the Old Testament view of history in order to be saved from falling into "the traps of mythology or speculation" (OTT, II, 386).

³EvTh, 24 (1964), pp. 391ff.

materials the historical and factual are inseparable from the spiritualizing interpretation given them. Besides, the version of history constructed by modern Historie, working with the historico-critical method, is already interpreted history working from a philosophy of history that cannot perceive God acting in history.¹

In short, von Rad is ready to assert that the kerygmatic picture of the history is also a fundamental fact of a tremendous process at work in history. He is not prepared to accept the results of historical positivism as settled and binding, or as relatively closed and binding truth of historical reality. He will not give up his occupation with the kerygmatic picture of the history because he is convinced that sooner or later there will be essential agreement on both aspects of this history. Von Rad feels that this is the solution to the problem. Modern Historie sees no solution. We do not have facts versus allusion here. A return to the facts of modern Historie (historische Tatsächlichkeit) would mean the end of the Old Testament, because its proper subject, its word from God, succumbs to it.²

Because von Rad is not concerned with the problem of how a method treats the disparity between the two versions of the history, but rather sees the differences in descriptions within the concept of history itself, he has been misunderstood by Hesse. Hesse thinks that the historico-critical version of the history is theologically irrelevant for von Rad. He feels nothing is gained theologically because von Rad misses the objective historical grounding of Israel's report.³ Von Rad responds that he had never

¹TAT, II, 8ff. Cf. OTT, II, 418. ²EvTh, 24 (1964), pp. 393.

³Hesse, KuD, 4 (1958), pp. 1-19; ZThK, 57 (1960), pp. 17ff., 24, 25.

stated that he was not concerned with the actual course of Israel's history. The entire description of the sequence of the historical traditions stands or falls with our historico-critical knowledge of the course of Israel's history. Concerning missing the objective historical basis, von Rad points to the way the stories of Abraham's call, Isaac's sacrifice, the endangering of the ancestress, and the story of Joseph, tell something that Israel experienced in her history with God. The experiences in these stories are comprehensive; sometimes the experiences of many generations are included in one story.¹ Therefore, von Rad will not accept Hesse's remarks that the historical contents, such as the story of Isaac's sacrifice or the call of Abraham, "niemal so geschehen hat" or that the picture of the early history is "absolut unrichtig."² This decision forces itself into a sphere of real historical experiences in which it has no competence. The same applies to the remarks of Hempel, who makes a distinction between the "subjektiv menschliche Welt" and what actually (tatsächliche) took place.³ Behind the critiques of Hesse and Hempel there is a conception of God's acts and human

¹TAT, II, 8ff. Von Rad uses much the same argument against G. E. Wright's objection to his evaluation of the history of the patriarchs ("Modern Issues in Biblical Studies: History and the Patriarchs," ET, 71 [1960], pp. 292ff.). Von Rad argued that one cannot hope to recover the authentic history of the patriarchs from the type of source material available. The authentic history cannot be untangled from the other material mixed in with it. But even if a clear historical picture of the patriarchs could be attained nothing would be gained theologically from it. Wright, because he does not consider the stories in their present form historical documents, must make a choice of what he thinks is historical. He thus parts company with the biblical presentation and considers later accounts. Von Rad holds that the original historical element is not the authentic element in these stories, but the revisional elements. He accuses Wright of entering an area that has nothing to say theologically when he concentrates on the original occurrence (ET, 72 [1961], pp. 213ff.).

²KuD, 4 (1958), p. 11.

³BO, 15 (1958), p. 213.

faith which must become contradictory. If one wishes to retain the "Word" from the actual history, one should understand by the category of theology only history which has been brought into motion by God and which he has formed ever anew. While Hesse and Hempel agree with this, they demand that this history behind the witness must be objectively attested and verified for it to be theologically relevant. Von Rad states that it would be serious matter if the question of the relationship of theology to historical reality, which has been so widely discussed, should come to rest on such an insufficient answer. The historical method opens up only one aspect of the many-layered phenomenon of history, but even the best attested occurrence of actual history is silent if its relevance for faith is not objectively verifiable. The "witness" is needed for this. One cannot show that God has spoken in the picture of modern Historie, nor can one recognize the theological relevance of this course of the history when he as a historian distrusts Israel's understanding of her history. Von Rad affirms that he will trust Israel's statements that the conquest of Jerusalem was a judgment of God, a conclusion that cannot be reached by modern historical methods. One has to retain Israel's confession which understands what Israel says in a more real way than the Babylonian general or the modern chronicler sees it. With regard to external causes and their causal connections, modern Historie sees them more clearly, but both pictures are important. While modern Historie illuminates on the one hand, it also obscures for it shuts out the dimension of history which Israel never lost sight of, viz., its "total openness to God."¹

¹TAT, II, 9ff.

When Hesse and Hempel wish to go back to a reality more reliable than Israel's own confession, it means nothing less than basically disputing the theological competence of Israel's own statements. This makes a claim of superiority over Israel's own experiences which is capable of saying what is more historical and more real than what Israel herself said. It provides the standard by which Israel's statements are to be measured. But Israel's word is not to be replaced or authenticated by it. As for Maag's remarks, von Rad can only see in them an impossible moralization of an extensive spiritual phenomenon, namely, Israel's thinking about her history over the centuries. This means a renunciation of an unbiased theological analysis of Israel's historical traditions. These, von Rad feels, one can understand by other terms than "verfälschenden Fiktion," or "frommen Lüge."¹ Because Maag evaluates things from the starting place of the lie of the pragmatist, he searches for the positive in a different direction than Hesse. He is concerned with the "Gottesgriffenheit einer Seele," the "individuelle Erkenntnis" which is due to the "wesentlichen Fortschritte Religion." The routine of the cult lacks this divine seizure. The cult provides only substitutes for what cannot be mediated. In short, Maag believes the religious individual is able to give a truly competent judgment for Israel in a theology of the Old Testament. Because Maag does not accept a form ritually expanded until its original content is lost as the witness of God's acts, there is nothing left to do, remarks von Rad, but clear away the pious lies and fiction in order to penetrate through to the voice of what has actually been "seized" by God. In von Rad's opinion, animosity

¹These and the following quotations in this paragraph appear in TAT, II, 10.

against cultic routine, cultic activity in the priestly office, the form which loses its original content, and the one-sided and overestimated talk of what has been seized by God do not provide a basis for the unfolding of an Old Testament theology. The Old Testament picture of the history has its own value, and von Rad has made an attempt to give it its place. What he has tried to avoid in his description is the replacing of Israel's picture of the history with the history of ideas, or putting it in the realm of spiritualization. The Old Testament text comes out of history and its goal is history. This prevents the Old Testament presentation from any spiritual sublimation and protects against an interest in the spiritual consciousness of the narrator, or what Baumgärtel calls the inner history.

VI. Summary

Among the differences of opinion the critics advance regarding history and theology, certain common criticisms stand out:

1. Generally there is agreement that some kind of systematic approach is needed.
2. The radical disjuncture of the two versions of Israel's history is intolerable. Eichrodt holds that some kind of reconciliation is necessary and possible. Hesse, Hempel and Maag also find the separation objectionable, stressing the real over the false report. Baumgärtel does not hold either version to be theologically relevant, but points out that von Rad's method of retelling must have something that really happened in order to be valid.
3. The question of the relationship between these two versions of history also affects the way typology is employed as a unifying factor to the

Testaments, for if something in the Old Testament never happened, or never happened as reported, how can we see anything prefigured in it?

Von Rad's reaffirmation of his idea of history is directed against positivism and the type of conclusions one draws about the biblical material when the kerygmatic version is judged by it. He will not accept the idea that this is only an inner history. Such conclusions are not legitimate. One must not employ a method that claims superiority over Israel's own experiences and dictates what is more historical or more real than what Israel herself said. We must allow Israel's account of her history its own standing. We can see that even with this reaffirmation the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved but merely clarified as a problem.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES AND THE QUESTION OF METHODOLOGY

I. General Problems Within the Debate

We may say that the development of Old Testament theology has passed through three major phases since the historico-critical method has become the tool to be applied in order to understand the Old Testament. These phases are: (a) a purely chronological description of the history of Israel's religion; (b) a systematic presentation of ideas deriving from that history; and (c) a description of the confessional statements. The first of these gave no thought to the spiritual reality of the Old Testament message nor recognized it as containing a religion of revelation. It would seem that alone this discipline has no place in an Old Testament theology because it is controlled by an outmoded historicism based on rationalistic dogmatism and a relative scientific method which in many respects has been greatly modified or abandoned by most scholars. Despite the support of disciples of great conviction¹ the presuppositions by which this discipline functions are very narrow if not naive, and at best it presents

¹R. H. Pfeiffer, Religion in the Old Testament (New York, 1961), p. 9, distinguishes between the view and method of the historian and the theologian and philosopher. The historian searches for "actual historical reality," not for "normative faith and doctrine." He will make his presentation with "serene objectivity" and impartiality. Any view from the point of faith would reflect the faith of the researcher and the doctrines he defends. We see here a sharp dichotomy between faith and history as in Eissfeldt's essay.

a limited idea of what is meant by Old Testament theology. The second phase recognized the peculiar nature of the Old Testament and concentrated on formulating such ideas as the history of Israel's religion allowed, often with a view to their clearer explication and fulfillment in the New Testament. But here too there are basic weaknesses and inconsistencies: (a) the religio-historical perspective dominates while that of the New Testament is sometimes slighted; (b) the importance of divine events is neglected in the concern for ideas; (c) the principle of selection and arrangement may become subjective in a systematic approach, and the Grundgedanke can become a controlling formula for the Old Testament "Ideologie der Geschichte";¹ (d) a conflict appears between assuming a historical approach and beginning the theological discussion with a subject which, according to the historical methodology, is theologically secondary and a derivative of the God who acts in history. The third attempts to avoid a description of the history of Israel's religion or a systematic formulation of ideas, believing that the variety of testimonies in the Old Testament to history excludes such a formulation. Representative of this phase is von Rad's theology and to some degree, in avoiding a religio-historical approach, that of Vriezen.

The shortcoming of putting the religio-historical point of view in the foreground, while the theological perspective recedes, has been observed

¹The expression is used by C. Barth, "Grundprobleme einer Theologie des Alten Testaments," EvTh, 23 (1963), p. 351, with reference made to the assessment of the covenant concept by A. Weiser, Glaube und Geschichte im Alten Testament (Göttingen, 1961), p. 148.

in the thematic work of Eichrodt.¹ This seems strange because Eichrodt assumes that the "profoundest meaning" of the Old Testament is found in its relation to its "religious environment" and its "essential coherence" with the New Testament,² and that the two-way flow between the Old Testament and the New is necessary to understand the full significance of Old Testament thought.³

In their concern for ideas both Eichrodt and Köhler slight the importance of events and institutions as means by which revelation came to Israel. This is especially true of Köhler. His evaluation of the cult is very negative. Any of the approaches that concentrate on ideas and employ a central concept in order to unify all the material under it may actually distort some material in a systematic treatment of the Old Testament. Eichrodt has been accused of forcing his material into the covenant concept and making reference to the covenant where it is not evident.⁴ It appears to be a basic weakness that any concept which includes all the various witnesses of the Old Testament is bound to distort other Old Testament themes subsumed under it, as well as to lose something of the historical

¹R. Rendtorff, Zwischenstation, pp. 208ff. Cf. H. J. Kraus, Die Biblische Theologie (Neukirchen, 1970), p. 128; and R. Davidson, Biblical Criticism (London, 1970), p. 144 [hereafter Criticism].

²TOT, I, 31.

³TOT, I, 26.

⁴R. Davidson comments on this criticism made against Eichrodt by stating that it is "at once valid and irrelevant"; valid because he had used a symbol found in the Old Testament to portray the relationship between God and Israel and classified his material by means of it; irrelevant because the idea of covenant is a symbol which represents the fact that every Old Testament expression productive of faith is based on an explicit or implicit assumption that an act of God in history has created the people of God (Criticism, pp. 143f.).

perspective as dictated by the acts of God. In a theology such as Eichrodt's where history is taken so seriously, the saving acts should be given more attention since they are more representative of the way revelation came to Israel than are the clear formulations of ideas. On the other hand, because making sense of the diverse testimonies is as much a part of theology as describing the differences, the advantages of a systematic approach should not be overlooked. But it should be remembered that there are different opinions concerning what a systematic approach should accomplish in a theology of the Old Testament.¹ We might also point out that applying an idea of history to the Old Testament that is foreign to its own ideas might distort the intent of the biblical message just as much as any central idea would do.

The methodological tension which arises between developing a theology of the Old Testament systematically and historically and allowing the Old

¹A survey of programs and individual convictions on methodology and presentation among contemporary Old Testament theologians is given by R. B. Laurin, Contemporary Old Testament Theologians (Valley Forge, 1970). See also Dentan, op. cit. The idea of a basic concept for organizing Old Testament theologies is held indispensable by some theologians and rejected by others. It is interesting to note the change in attitude on the part of G. E. Wright on this subject. In "Reflections concerning Old Testament Theology," Studia Biblica et Semitica (Wageningen, 1966), pp. 376ff., he, on the one hand, questions the validity of employing a single concept to organize a theology because it is inadequate to encompass the variety of biblical material; while on the other hand, he approves of a central theme for organizing one's work due to the complexities of history. Yet he states that a mode of revelation concerned with the centrality of events cannot be systematized. In relation to this, we should consider his book, God Who Acts (first published in 1952), where he rejects the systematic approach, asserting that Old Testament theology is a historical discipline. In his latest book, The Old Testament and Theology (New York, 1969), p. 62, he appears to favor the covenant concept for the recital of God's acts. This brings him close to Eichrodt, whose covenant idea is not only central to understanding that Israel's expressions of faith were based on God's acts in history but then goes on to bring the variety of Old Testament thought under its influence. A contributing factor to this change in methodology is surely the threat von Rad's fragmenting methodology presents to Wright's idea of history, in addition to his own demand for some kind of theological unity.

Testament to dictate its own starting point is evident in the second part of Jacob's Theology of the Old Testament. While confessing that Old Testament theology is basically historical and descriptive, as is the history of Israel's religion, he begins discussing the action of God in Creation before he discusses God as the Lord of history. According to his stated approach this seems to be a contradiction. But should there be any serious objection to beginning a discussion of God's activity with Creation? Jacob has chosen to begin with Creation even though he recognizes that it is secondary to the idea of the covenant, and even though he confesses that faith in the creator God is less important than faith in the God who saves, the God who brought Israel out of Egypt, thus the God who acts in history. His starting place seems to be dictated by the idea that it is only because of Creation that the covenant is possible. Is it not proper to recognize that the way knowledge of God came to Israel is not totally dependent on or derivative from the idea of the God who acts in history? Creation has a certain independence of its own for the faith that is not subject completely to the covenant point of view.

Another problem appears in the work of Vriezen, who basically follows Eissfeldt's guidelines. Vriezen divides his work into two parts. This reminds us of von Rad's two histories. The first part of Vriezen's work lays down the conditions and requirements for the second, the theological part. The theological part is confessional; and the message of the Old Testament is to be evaluated on the basis of the New Testament starting point. But the theological part does not entirely agree with the delineation of the requirements. The theological section is less dependent upon the New Testament starting point that we are led to expect. Because of his concern with

the historical content of theology, the intention of making the New Testament revelation the basic presupposition for understanding the Old Testament is not as evident as we would expect it to be.

II. Advantages of von Rad's Traditio-historical (Heilsgeschichte) Approach

A. Protest Against Positivism

The first and perhaps primary advantage of von Rad's approach is that it is an attempt to extricate the historical element in theology from the grips of positivism. Historical positivism which concentrates on the "facts" attempts to bring the Old Testament understanding of history in line with its views. This modern view of history does not perceive any divine activity in history,¹ thus the kerygmatic picture that Israel drew of her history is brought into conflict with it. While von Rad is justified in wishing to give the kerygmatic picture its place because it is a history with God, in reacting against positivism he has adopted a position that allows him to speak of the kerygmatic version of Israel's history as if it had no connection with the historico-critical version. Thus what seems to be an advantage in his approach may actually turn out to be a disadvantage.

B. Protest Against Rationalistic Systematization

Another advantage is that in protesting against the systematization of the Old Testament he has to some degree avoided presenting a consistently

¹OTT, II, 418ff.

logical and rational theology of the Old Testament. A presentation which instead stresses that Israel's understanding of Yahweh came through divine acts and words is more in line with the way the Old Testament presents itself to us. The best unifying formula must sooner or later make contrary material "fit" and thus is inadequate, if not guilty of misleading us.

Working with various positions, or even between them, has been suggested as providing a satisfactory remedy, and so it would seem that various themes could be justified by allowing us to see the Old Testament from different angles.¹ But the formula is not the only thing that is problematical; understanding unity postulated on the basis of thinking is also problematical. The demand for a rationally and logically unified presentation might have its place in a philosophical system or in religion, but its value for the Old Testament is another question.² Von Rad would seem to have a point in his reaction to systematization. Behind all the effort to systematize the biblical material and present a unified system of belief seems to lie the presupposition of rationalism that assumed that everything should be answerable to reason, that all variety of life could be grasped rationally. Old Testament theology moves through the development of the history of Israel's religion; it explains and interprets texts; and lastly it goes beyond these tasks and attempts to outline the central concepts, purposes and

¹J. Barr, "Gerhard von Rad's Theologie des Alten Testaments," ET, 73 (1961-62), pp. 142ff.

²C. Barth, EvTh, 23 (1963), pp. 350ff. We should not be led to believe that von Rad has avoided all systematic tendencies however. Eichrodt notes how he organizes material under the idea of "Israel's Anointed."

teachings of the entire literature of the Old Testament. This requires systematic and reconstructive effort, and in this it is brought closer to philosophy than all other biblical study. Behind all the effort expended to determine structure and formulate the questions in a systematic presentation of Old Testament theology, there lies the assumption of rationalism that with enough work all the theological questions can be answered satisfactorily.¹ Yet it appears to us that with all the benefits derived from systematic presentations of Israel's ideas we should be reluctant to reject systematization as categorically as does von Rad.

III. Disadvantages and Weaknesses of the Traditio-historical (Heils- geschichte) Approach

A. Separation from the History of Israel's Religion

Von Rad has basically used the same method, i.e., history-of-traditions, to reconstruct both the history of Yahwism and the theological section of his work, the Heilsgeschichte. Each is developed under different presuppositions. The history of Yahwism is developed by traditio-historical tools which, under certain historical² and philosophical presuppositions of the similarity of all events, attempt to construct a picture of the history

¹F. Sontag, RIL, 33 (1964), pp. 224ff.

²OTT, I, 107. A major problem appears here. Von Rad earlier stated that the Old Testament is the primary source exclusively for information on the history of the religion and worship of ancient Israel, but in the end his history of Yahwism is that picture presented by the historico-critical method. Cf. OTT, I, 3, 4.

as it "really" was.¹ The first phase of this work is to isolate a form and decide that its Sitz-im-Leben is the cult; the second phase goes behind the form to the individual traditions in the form which are then described in terms of their original situation. The history is then reconstructed on this basis, using other historical materials to supplement the account. The second section is developed under the theological and historical presuppositions that the history of Israel was created and moved by the word of God which presupposes a constant reinterpretation and reactualization of traditions giving them a history of transmission. Investigation of this history of transmission brings to light Israel's theological activity.

We have already pointed out that von Rad's theology has two parts: the history of Yahwism and the theological exposition of the Heilsgeschichte. The history of Yahwism is not, "even in the slightest degree," intended to present a history of faith and cult, but is only given as an introduction to show the historical place of the subject matter with which von Rad is involved in his theological section.² Yet here we find a presentation of the most important sacral institutions of ancient Israel and the different phases in the history of her faith.³ Knowledge of the subjects presented

¹Von Rad uses the word "actual" or "real" in various places to distinguish the report of the history in this section from the history in the theological section (OTT, I, 3, 4, 41f., 57, 107f.; II, 424).

²OTT, I, vii.

³OTT, I, vi. In his debate with Hesse, von Rad states that event and interpretation are so fused they are difficult to separate (TAT, II, 8f.). But does not von Rad do this when he constructs a history of Yahwism using the Old Testament as his source? Presenting a history of Yahwism depends on being able to reconstruct the history of Israel as it really was. How, then, is von Rad able to reconstruct the picture drawn up by faith without being able to separate event and interpretation of faith, which has taken form in the picture presented by the way traditions are fused

in the first part is presupposed by the second part, yet it is not supposed to be understood as a part of the unfolding of the theology. Here he is attempting a separation of theology and the history of Israel's religion.¹

But von Rad is working as both theologian and historian in this critical section. The historical picture is not written without an interest in the way the theological picture takes shape; the critical picture supports the

together? Another problem resulting from this contradiction has been pointed out by U. Simon, "Theology of Israel," CQR, 164 (1963), pp. 237-39. What is Yahwism if we now are to recognize such a complex stratification of the tradition, if we must forget about Yahweh being the center of the Old Testament because of the question, "What kind of a Yahweh is he?" (OTT, II, 415). Is it possible after saying this to then attempt a description of Yahwism, or the priestly teaching or the Deuteronomist without also considering the history of the cult and law or the changing circumstances of a people called "Israel" who we cannot know in such a way that we can refer to them as it or he?

¹Hempel, BO, 15 (1958), pp. 212ff., contends that the separation of the history of Yahwism from the theology of the historical traditions is impossible because we do not have non-Israelite materials. Information can be found in no other source than the theology of the Yahwist. Hempel also contends that some of the materials that von Rad uses for his historical section are of doubtful value. Citing Noth he states that there is a vacuum behind the old pictures and one cannot go to what lies behind it. Von Rad is mistaken in his attempt to do so. Von Rad's use of the Nabatean texts and Moritz's Sinai inscription, besides the inference from the lives of camel-owning nomads for a description of the Midianites to which Jethro belonged, are of doubtful value. Arguments for the use of Nabatean texts are not valid outside the agricultural lands, and the inscriptions at Sinai from the 2nd century A.D. being proof for the successors of the earlier cult of Yahweh are even mentioned by von Rad with caution. To sum it up, the way von Rad organizes his work is not feasible. Hempel also disagrees with the literary presuppositions that lie behind von Rad's work. This methodology that determines formulas and traditions should be avoided. There is a question whether these traditions because of form and wording suggest objective documents. See W. F. Albright's article, "Midianite Donkey Caravans," Translating and Understanding the Old Testament, ed. by H. T. Frank and W. L. Reed (Nashville, 1970), pp. 197ff., for relevant material regarding the place of donkeys and camels in Old Testament texts dealing with the Midianites.

theological one;¹ and the destructive purpose of the critical picture does not come through.² By way of the suggestion that this is a critical investigation, von Rad can ask what the faith of Israel actually said via its own picture of the history and via the history of Israel. Despite von Rad's intentions it appears that those who have denied he has achieved a separation between the history of Israel's religion and her theology are correct.³

Whatever is said about the attempted separation, von Rad's intentions have caused serious problems for theological understanding. Perhaps the most obvious one is his disintegration of the Moses tradition which causes him to posit the rise of Israel's religion by the "chance coalescence" of various independent traditions.⁴ K. Koch is basically in agreement with von Rad, over against Eichrodt, concerning this matter of the Moses tradition, yet calls for a constant attempt to explain the origin of Yahwism. Without this explanation it is not clear to what extent Israel's statements of faith about Yahweh's unique historical acts have anything to do with the

¹It is no doubt this interdependency that causes von Rad to assert: "Die theologische Deutung der alttestamentlichen Texte setzt aber nicht erst da ein, wo der literarkritisch und historisch geschulte Exeget (so oder so!) seine Arbeit getan hat, so dass wir also zwei Arbeitsgänge hatten, einen historisch-kritischen und dann einen 'theologischen.' Die theologische Deutung, die in dem Text eine Aussage von Gott zu begreifen sucht, ist von ersten Anfang des Verstehensprozesses wirksam" (TAT³, II, 8).

²C. Barth, EvTh, 23 (1963), p. 367.

³Besides the criticisms of Baumgärtel, Hesse, and Hempel, see also N. Porteous, "Old Testament and History," ASTI, 8 (1970-71), p. 30; and J. Barr, ET, 73 (1961-62), pp. 142ff.; Old and New, p. 98.

⁴TOT, I, 513.

revelation of God of which Christianity speaks.¹ M. Sekine observes that a basic weakness in von Rad's presentation is that the history of Yahwism he constructs shows no organic connections with the history constructed by faith.² In the reader's interest von Rad could have done more integration of materials. In the supposedly non-theological section we find important statements about the origin and development of the traditions of the Heilsgeschichte, but in the theological unfolding of these traditions their character as an answer to living confrontation is given another appearance. According to von Rad theological interest lies in the theological maximum and not the critically assured minimum, but R. Davidson has rightly pointed out that "it is by no means obvious why Israel should ever have constructed this theological maximum," yet this is one of the basic facts that a critical approach will have to deal with.³ Is there no merit in expressing the significance of what we know about the origin of the cultic and social laws when he treats the significance of the commandments given in Sinai?⁴ Von Rad could have included material in the chapter "Crisis Due to the Formation of the State," which has relevance for his theological exposition in the chapter, "Israel's Anointed." The chapter on "Sacral Office and Charisma" states that the charisma is a constitutive force in Yahwism. The prophets are closely identified with this force as they actualize the traditions in

¹"Der Tod des Religionsstifters," KuD, 8 (1962), p. 107. Cf. R. Rendtorff, "Entstehung der israelitischen Religion als religionsgeschichtliches und theologisches Problem," ThLZ, 88 (1963), pp. 735ff.

²"Von Verstehen der Heilsgeschichte das Grundproblem der alttestamentlichen Theologie," ZAW, 75 (1963), pp. 145ff.

³"Faith and History in the Old Testament," ET, 77 (1965-66), p. 101.

⁴OTT, I, 196ff. See C. Barth, EvTh, 23 (1963), p. 367.

their work while at the same time ignoring other material. It appears that because this subject is so intimately bound up with the prophetic actualization, the traditions attributable to Yahweh's intervention in history, and the call of the prophets themselves which are certainly basic to the prophetic traditions, that it is inseparable from the theological exposition. Besides, a linkage with religio-historical studies is necessary to prevent the charismatic tendencies of the expositor from running wild and divorcing his message from the historical meaning of the text and all the necessary considerations related to Israel's environment.

Should not one assume that for the sake of understanding the biblical message that the entire way Israel arranged, combined, and reinterpreted her traditions, even though this is viewing her history from a modern perspective, belongs to any consideration of Israel's history whether the historico-critical or the one constructed by faith? While we should exercise caution in saying that the Heilsgeschichte is a part of her history as seen from the historico-critical point of view, bringing the Heilsgeschichte under critical domination, we should also take care not to exclude other categories of historical understanding. Moreover, Baumgärtel's observation that if the Heilsgeschichte is described and clarified by means of critical historical method it is a part of history and there can be no separation between theology and the history of Israel's religion seems correct.

This point is clearly illustrated by the confusing problem von Rad has posed by stating that the Heilsgeschichte ended in the exile. To understand what von Rad means by this, one must refer to the historico-critical section of his work. Along with his explanation of how the Heilsgeschichte

had come to an end with the destruction of the two kingdoms, von Rad finds it necessary in the history of Yahwism to speak of the Heilsgeschichte and the way it ended. He states that for Israel, especially the Israel of the later monarchial period, the Heilsgeschichte had come to a "leisurely" end. Israel was no longer "conscious" of being at the center of history created by Yahweh.¹ This is both a historical and a theological statement. By it von Rad apparently means that with the loss of charismatic leadership in war due to the rise of the state, warfare fell into the realm of the secular and this meant that the main area of Yahweh's activity, "his action in history, and his protection of Israel, were lost to Jahwism."² "Since about the time of David, she had increasingly written off Jahweh as her God as far as the present and the future were concerned;" politics and the future now became her own responsibility, Heilsgeschichte was brought to a "standstill."³ When we consider the expression that Israel "increasingly" disregarded Yahweh as her God, along with the gradual disintegration of the cult, we can form an idea of how, and what he means by saying, Heilsgeschichte

¹OTT, I, 70.

²OTT, I, 95. It was in the holy war that the demand for faith in Yahweh had its roots (OTT, I, 17). With the era of David the situation deviated "more and more" from the amphictyonic order. The state "more and more" freed itself from the control of Yahweh. The clans "increasingly" lost their individual capacities to the state (OTT, I, 44). "'Life' and cult began to go their separate ways" (OTT, I, 56).

³OTT, II, 182. Much of the difficulty in understanding how the Heilsgeschichte ended abruptly and then again gradually is resolved by the observation that for some time two ways of actualizing history existed "side by side," i.e., cultic and chronological actualization. The gradual end is responsible to the degenerating cultic situation, and the dominance of law over Heilsgeschichte in the post-exilic community.

came to a "leisurely end."¹ Along with this we should consider the statement:

Investigation of the history of traditions completely confirms this picture of later Israel's increasing detachment from her sacral traditions, as emerges from various notices in the history and especially from the books of the contemporary prophets.²

The Yahwist shows that Israel experienced God's activity only "intermittently" in the holy war or feats connected with charismatic leadership.³ "The main emphasis in God's dealings with his people is now to be sought outside the sacral institutions."⁴ This observation is reinforced by von Rad's description of the Deuteronomistic history. It deals not with confessional themes or materials, but with real historical documents and real historiography. The Deuteronomist was "still" aware that with Joshua an "important epoch" in Yahweh's saving action came to a close. "For the generation after Joshua, 'Jahweh's work' with Israel--notice the singular--begins to be past history (Josh. 24:31; Jg. 2:7)."⁵

¹OTT, I, 70. We have here a description of a steady disintegration of the old cultic and sacral way of life. The contemporaneousness of the divine acts began to diminish at a later time of her faith (OTT, I, 105), and alongside it an overshadowing of what went before by the faith of the monarchy, the great "new" thing, David, from the view of the Deuteronomist.

²OTT, I, 70; cf. 64. The prophets were also in harmony with the theory that Yahweh accompanied Israel through history and were aware of the obligations this incurred, in contrast to their contemporaries who "apparently" were not "greatly aware" of this (OTT, II, 112f.; italics supplied).

³It is important to note that von Rad speaks of the direct intervention of Yahweh in Jephthah's and in David's efforts, but holds that this is not the same as the old intervention. Although there are many stories of direct intervention in the Yahwistic work von Rad judges the intention of this work, i.e., to show divine guidance, by the stories where direct intervention is not present. This judgment favors stories in the minority to determine the theological purpose. OTT, I, 95; PH, 71f.

⁴PH, 71; cf. OTT, I, 38f.

⁵OTT, I, 306; italics supplied.

Apparently these "intermittent" dealings spoken of above are what von Rad refers to in the statement that the prophets stood at the "cross-roads" where God's dealings with Israel came into motion again after being "almost stationary."¹ At the same time it sounds as though the prophets stepped into a "vacuum" created by the absence of the direct intervention of Yahweh ² and recaptured for the faith the dimension of history and politics which had been lost to the monarchy.³ Later on he states that the prophets had first to "create" this vacuum into which her "religious assets" were thrown by their preaching of judgment and tear down all "false security."⁴ It appears that what he should be saying is that they swept away what was left of the security, for the cult was corrupted and its influence diminishing.⁵ Or perhaps the audience of the prophetic preaching referred to here is a limited one, not including all of Israel.

When von Rad discusses the relation of the prophets to the old divine acts he points out that the "saving ordinances" (Heilssetzungen) have lost their "saving worth," and at another time writes that the prophets deny the saving worth of the "divine events" (göttlichen Setzungen). To bridge the "saving ordinances" and the "divine events" von Rad attributes "saving worth" (Heilskraftigkeit) to the "divine events." Thus he avoids describing the degenerating cultic situation which has resulted in the saving ordinances losing their saving worth. The difficulty of understanding these concepts results from the inseparability of event and cult or history and cult. The prophets by abolishing the security in this degenerating situation create

¹OTT, II, 298.

²OTT, I, 69f.

³OTT, I, 95f.

⁴OTT, II, 115.

⁵OTT, I, 61ff.; II, 14f.

a vacuum by their preaching, but because of the weakening of cultic actualization of the "divine acts" there is already a vacuum into which the prophets step.¹

While we agree to some extent with him that Israel's thought world cannot be separated from her history, we do not feel that the way he describes the prophetic attitude to the past history of Israel is necessarily the way the prophets thought about history. This seems to be a theological opinion based elsewhere.² We find it dissatisfying, however, to have to refer to the critical work to discover the meaning of this statement about the end of the Heilsgeschichte. We have seen that von Rad's traditional historical observations in the critical section demand that the Heilsgeschichte end in the exile. This is because it exposes a growing detachment from the cult and the prophetic emphasis on "new acts." Heilsgeschichte again comes into being only by the future actualization of the old divine acts by the prophets.³ Heilsgeschichte is, therefore, only present where the old acts are experienced as efficacious for salvation, and salvation is only in the reactualization of the old acts.

¹For references to these expressions see above, p. 185. We discussed this idea of the degenerating cult and its place in the understanding of his theology with von Rad, and although not denying what we have said he preferred to describe the cultic situation as a "weakening" due to the passage of time from Moses onward.

²We wonder if this is not a vestige of the Law-Grace dichotomy that also governs Bultmann's views of the history of Israel being one of failure.

³Again, Heilsgeschichte faded out in the post-exilic period. The law began "more and more" to define who belonged to Israel and who did not. Yahweh's revelation was no longer flexible. The adapting of the revelation to the place and time and condition of the contemporary Israel ceased. The law became an "absolute entity," valid without reference to the time or place in history. The commandments were no longer the "directing will of God who conducted his people through history." Hitherto the commandments

B. The Results of Concentrating on Fragments

G. E. Wright has singled out one of the basic weaknesses of von Rad's traditio-historical approach when he points out that because the form critic is always concerned with fragments he tends to consider fragments as most important.¹ This attitude is obviously responsible for von Rad's emphasis that there are many theologies and a variety of historical testimonies in the Old Testament, therefore a systematic method cannot do justice to the Old Testament. Even though we admit that to some extent this is true, it essentially causes von Rad to lose sight of any conceptual unity in the Old Testament.² In this sense Eichrodt's and Vriezen's criticisms are justified. But von Rad's stress on the disunity of the revelational acts and his limited description of the relationship between God and his people causes us to assume that he is working from a position that is too radically reactionary, which assumes that we cannot ask questions on the eternal nature and reality of God.

had been at the people's service, but now Israel served the commandments. Yet the "old way" of considering the commandments continued for a considerable time. But when the law became absolute, Israel "parted company with history." She "did not part company with her relationship" with Yahweh; but because of viewing Yahweh's will in a "timeless and absolute way," the Heilsgeschichte ceased moving on. Israel now had no history, "at least" not one with Yahweh. She now served Yahweh in a "beyond history." OTT, I, 91f.

¹ET, 71 (1959-60), pp. 292-96.

²Von Rad would seem to have a point in his favor for acknowledging the disunity of the Old Testament by referring to the difficulty the specialist in Romance or German literature would have in understanding the product of over a thousand years of a people's literary history as a unity (OTT, II, 427). Cf. J. Gray's statement, "consistency of thought in such a miscellaneous record of revelation over a millenium can be no more than relative, and at most can be expected only at the editorial stage" ("Towards a Theology of the Old Testament: The Contribution of Archaeology," ET, 74 [1962-63], p. 350).

Because von Rad's purpose is only to investigate the traditions in their many aspects to determine their relationship to the words and acts of God in history, he sees no "Mitte"¹ in the Old Testament. This makes it necessary to find unity in some other aspect. This he does by seeing a constant saving movement in the Old Testament, in other words, the movement from promise to fulfillment.² In holding that the Old Testament lacks a Mitte,³ von Rad excludes the possibility of discovering a basic unifying concept. But he still sees in the Old Testament a constant saving movement from promise to fulfillment which constitutes the Heilsgeschichte. This view is very close to the formulation of the Deuteronomistic theology of history which we have attempted to show is the hermeneutical principle by which von Rad interprets the Old Testament. Although Baumgartel's retort that in this movement God keeps his elect in suspense seems sarcastic, is

¹A recent discussion by R. Smend, Die Mitte des Alten Testaments (Zurich, 1970), covers the development of this problem of the Mitte of the Old Testament. Smend points out that there has been a developing uncertainty about being able to identify a Mitte of the Old Testament. After giving a historical description of earlier attempts to locate a Mitte, he concludes that although a single concept cannot do justice to the various testimonies of the Old Testament the idea of "Yahweh the God of Israel" and "Israel the People of Yahweh" is able to express the tension between God and Israel. Another recent attempt to identify the center of the Old Testament comes from W. H. Schmidt, Das erste Gebot: Seine Bedeutung für das Alte Testament, Theologische Existenz heute, 165 (München, 1969). Schmidt argues that the first commandment can be used as a connection between earlier and later times and can become an integrating and unifying Mitte of the Old Testament. The question of the center of the Old Testament is now discussed at considerable length and with excellent reviews of the literature in G. Hasel's Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate (Grand Rapids, 1972), pp. 49ff., and in "The Problem of the Center in the OT Theology Debate," ZAW, 86 (1974), pp. 65ff.

²OTT, II, vii.

³Von Rad does admit that God stood at the center of a theologically flexible concept of history of the various writers of Israel's history (ThLZ, 88 [1963], p. 409).

he not correct in pointing out that regardless of how much von Rad maintains the primacy of the historical acts he has not avoided a basic theme in his work?¹ If the scheme of promise and fulfillment can be seen as a kind of organizing principle for the various theologies of the Old Testament, can von Rad be quite so emphatic in his rejection of systematization? While his organizational principle is not identifiable with one that proceeds from rationalistic presuppositions and his argument that systematization does not give the movement of history its due seems correct, yet if he interprets the older historico-theological delineations of the Old Testament by the theological tendency most evident in the later Deuteronomistic history we wonder how much more justifiable this is for interpreting the Old Testament than the "crosscut" method which seeks a unified way of Israel's thinking by making a Querschnitt through the historical process at various points. One may point out that von Rad's scheme becomes just as much a controlling formula as a Grundgedanke. Though we may view favorably his protest against rationalistic motives for unity in Old Testament theology, which seems to be a reflection of Western thought, and appreciate the insight he has given us into the differences in attitudes various ages held towards the traditions and concepts, his failure to provide a center which is more comprehensive and central to the theological discipline causes us to doubt that he has actually given us an Old Testament theology.

¹A contradiction arises here if one rejects any idea of a center, "Mitte" (both Grundgedanke and Grundstruktur), and then unites the diverse elements in the Old Testament with the scheme of promise and fulfillment. This is a Grundgedanke. "It was only in her position in the minimum between a promise and its fulfillment that Israel understood herself as a unit" (OTT, II, 416). C. Westermann, in a personal conversation with us, pointed out the impossibility of such a rigid rejection.

C. Failure to Avoid the Thought World

It is also questionable that Israel's thinking can be limited to thinking in terms of historical traditions while excluding the idea that she could think abstractly. Israel obviously did not think like the philosophers of ancient Greece, but von Rad's position here is controlled by his concentration on Israel's reflecting on historical tradition, and this causes passages which evidence an intense mental and spiritual activity, but whose relationship to the historical traditions is not very evident, to recede.¹ Even though he tries to do so, von Rad has not avoided the thought world of Israel.² This thought world is certainly presupposed when he investigates the Hebrew concept of time, the world, nature, and eschatology, as well as the concept of יְהוָה.³ We feel it proper for von Rad to discuss the concept of time, an idea that has very definite connotations for our modern understanding, but we must recognize that to do so he must make statements that refer to the cult and actualization of the Heilsgeschichte which gives definition to the Hebrew concept of time as being equatable with the moment and content of cultic actualization at a festival.

¹We refer mainly to Wisdom and narratives containing wisdom motifs, such as the Joseph story.

²Against von Rad, the Swedish theologian H. Ringgren, Israelite Religion (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 2, states: "Behind the theology of history of the Old Testament writers there are certainly ideas about God, man, etc. The documents may not express these ideas directly but thorough analysis brings them to light."

³One must beware of overemphasizing the differences between von Rad and his fellow theologians. Von Rad employs a new critical method, but common to all of them is the attempt to give more than a chronological description of Israel's religion. J. Barr, ET, 73 (1961-62), pp. 142ff., questions, with some right, the distinction von Rad places between his work

His idea of eschatology is thoroughly mixed in with the theological portion of his work, and to discuss it he has to make reference to how the prophets thought about history.¹ Tracing the meaning of $\Pi\rho\tau\chi$ through the different ages of Israel's history, showing its relationship, for instance, to $\chi\omega'$ in Second Isaiah is certainly being concerned with Israel's thought world even if he does stress that it "is out and out a term denoting . . . a real relationship between two parties . . . and not to the relationship of an object under consideration to an idea."²

D. The Control of the Heilsgeschichte

1. Israel's Salvation Faith. Our consideration here is actually historical and theological. We must understand that von Rad has by Formgeschichte isolated an old Credo in the Book of Deuteronomy, and has designated it the old canonical Heilsgeschichte. Von Rad should have said more about how he formulated this particular definition. The designation

and that of other Old Testament theologians. For example, Barr points out that when von Rad discusses these concepts, in which no distinction is seen by Israel with her world of history, but which are the results of the Heilsgeschichte, he is saying something which others working within different frameworks have also said. Barr also underscores the idea that when von Rad does such things as compare Hebrew thought with that of the Greeks, he works against his intention of retelling the Heilsgeschichte.

¹OTT, II, 112ff.

²Much of what von Rad says about $\Pi\rho\tau\chi$ is for the purpose of showing that theology has defined the concept by presuppositions of the West, i.e., conduct over against an absolute ethical norm. We noticed the emphasis placed on this contrast in the last class taught by Professor von Rad at Heidelberg University before his death, "Gerechtigkeit im Alten Testaments." We suspect that in treating this concept theologically he sought to free his students from understanding it with reference to rigid dogmatic positions and interest. Cf. OTT, I, 370f.

is made because von Rad characterizes Israel's religion as one of salvation,¹ and that each act in the Credo is a saving act. In isolating this Credo as a distinct form and evaluating it as Heilsgeschichte, he presupposes that the Credo is very old and is the nucleus of the entire Hexateuch.² This Credo was expanded by the addition of other traditions as they were understood in light of its salvation characteristics. Our question is that if other explanations of the existence of this Credo are forthcoming³ would

¹J. Barr has singled this point out (re OTT, I, 136f.) for criticism: "This is involved in historical-critical judgements, since it is said to be clear from the oldest confessional formulations. But the historical-critical judgements themselves are involved in the theological colourings of the terminology used; for there is no doubt that the fixation of 'faith', 'salvation', 'confession' and even 'Yahwistic' is to a large extent theological, in the sense that it depends upon models of understanding which cannot be tested and approved against the Old Testament itself directly" (Old and New, p. 75).

²It appears to us that too much of von Rad's work depends on presuppositions derived from the Book of Deuteronomy with its cultic character. Beginning theologically with the old Credo can only be justified by assenting to special presuppositions about the cultic nature of Deuteronomy. Here is where the idea of cultic actualization is found and the place where the old Credo is discovered. We become suspicious that an old Credo which served as the basis of the Hexateuch should be found in just this place where von Rad has labored so long. It also appears, as J. Barr points out, to be an odd place for such a nucleus to be found in the Pentateuch (Old and New, p. 74, n. 1).

³Von Rad's analysis of this Credo has been criticized by several scholars. The age and Sitz-im-Leben of Deut. 26:5-9 become very important in considering the validity of von Rad's historical judgments. He holds that the context in which the prayer is found is much later than the prayer itself. The Deuteromic phraseology is due to "retouching" (PH, 4, n. 3). L. Rost, Das kleine Credo und andere Studien zum Alten Testament (Heidelberg, 1965), pp. 12-19, however, concludes that the phraseology occurs almost exclusively in the texts of the seventh century and later. The closest parallels are not found with Urdeuteronomium or the Deuteronomic laws. The passage is to be dated just before the exile or shortly after it began. A second criticism comes from C. H. W. Brekelmans, "Het 'historische Credo' van Israel," TvT, 3 (1963), pp. 1-11. He does not believe that Deut. 26:5-9 is a distinct literary type. What von Rad has done is taken the respective passages out of context. If they are put back into their contexts

this not possibly alter the historical and theological presentation with its emphasis on existence and salvation above the historicity of the events in the Credo and other theological motifs such as Creation and the maintenance of the world or the particular function of law in Israel?

they will have to be evaluated as belonging to other types. Deut. 26:5-9 should not be separated from verse 10, but seen as an introductory historical summary that provides the incentive for the offering of the first fruits. The importance of the conclusion that the Credo is not old lies not only in the determination of the Gattung, but if it is not old, then the omission of Sinai in the Credo cannot be used as evidence for a separate Sinai tradition. Another study is offered by C. Carmichael, "A New View of the Origin of the Deuteronomic Credo," VT, 19 (1969), pp. 273-289. He concludes that Deut. 26:5-9 is of Deuteronomic provenance, the result of attempting to historicize the practice of offering the first fruits. A. Weiser, Introduction to the Old Testament (London, 1961), pp. 83ff., objects to von Rad's hypothesis because the historical validity (period, tribe) of a festival at Gilgal in which the festival legend, a separate conquest tradition based on Deut. 26:5-9, was celebrated is questionable. Thus, Weiser questions the separation of the Sinai tradition from the conquest tradition on the basis of their being located in separate festivals. The Sinai tradition is absent from the Credo because it recounts an encounter with Yahweh leading up to the acceptance of God's will given in the commandments. It would naturally not be in those texts concerned with acts of salvation. History and law as basic elements of the tradition existed together from early times. G. Fohrer, Introduction to the Old Testament (Nashville, 1968), pp. 118ff., rejects von Rad's claims on the basis that the Sinai tradition and the Exodus tradition were originally connected and also on lack of evidence for the postulated festival at Gilgal. Nor does he see that the conquest tradition in Joshua grew out of an old Credo anymore than did the Hexateuch. See also Th. C. Vriezen, "The Credo in the Old Testament," in Studies on the Psalms, papers read at the 6th meeting O. T. Werkgeenschap im S. Afrika, 1963, pp. 5ff.; J. Hempel, loc. cit.; P. Hyatt, "Were there an Ancient Historical Credo in Israel and an Independent Sinai Tradition?," Translating and Understanding the Old Testament, pp. 152ff. (this article is a summation in English of nearly all the important critiques of the old Credo); W. Richter, "Beobachtungen zur theologischen Systembildung in der alttestamentlichen Literatur an Hand des 'Kleinen geschichtlichen Credo,'" Wahrheit und Verkündigung, ed. by L. Scheffczyk, W. Dettloff, R. Heinzmann (München, 1967), I, 175-222. The argument here is that the Credo stands not at the beginning of a development, but is itself built up by a very complicated process, thus it is impossible to find a single Sitz-im-Leben like a cultic festival.

The judgment that Israel's religion was a salvation faith exercises a commanding influence over the rest of the Old Testament materials and even seems to determine the way von Rad employs his method. With the isolation of the old Credo (Heilsgeschichte) which does not contain a reference to the Sinai tradition, he can conclude that it was not a part of the original confession but was added at a later time.¹ The growth of the traditions in the Hexateuch is dependent on individual traditions being brought into the context of the old Credo when they are seen in relation to the salvation faith of Israel. The Sinai tradition was added because it was descriptive of how God's saving will came to Israel. The creation narrative was used as a preface to the old Credo only when Israel found the "correct" theological relationship between these two elements. She had to learn how to connect Creation theologically with the Heilsgeschichte. Thus it took a long time for Israel to bring her older belief of Creation into the "proper" theological relationship with what she believed about "the saving acts done by Jahweh in history."² What determines this "proper" and "incorrect" theological relationship? The dependence of von Rad's theological presuppositions upon the ideas of Karl Barth, especially where it touches

¹Along with the comments in the above footnote the thorough work of W. Beyerlin, Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions (Oxford, 1965), is applicable to this problem. Beyerlin concludes that the Sinai tradition cannot be separated from the Exodus tradition, or the election of Israel from the Covenant. His work draws on and supports conclusions reached by G. E. Mendenhall, Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East (The Biblical Colloquium, 1955). J. Gray, ET, 74 (1962-63), pp. 347ff., offers the opinion that the similarities between the Mosaic Covenant and the Hittite vassal treaties of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C. suggest that the Mosaic Covenant was more than a tribal cult-myth developed in Palestine as von Rad suggests.

²OTT, I, 136.

on the substance of Barth's statement about the covenant being the "internal basis of Creation," and Creation being the "external basis of the covenant,"¹ has been pointed out by S. van der Woude.² The presupposition here is that God's historical acts of salvation are the proper acts, and if this is so then Creation and the maintenance of the earth are to be seen predominantly within the context of soteriology. Von Rad affirms that Creation is the starting place of God's saving work,³ and because Israel was called into existence through Yahweh's acts, Creation is an "aetiology" of Israel.⁴ The whole argument becomes a tautology. Creation became a preface to the Heilsgeschichte when it was recognized as a saving act, and the way we know it was a saving act is because it was prefaced to the Heilsgeschichte. The history-of-traditions method is being guided here by theological presuppositions stemming from von Rad's belief concerning what constitutes a proper theological position and in a circular way each confirms the statements of the other.

2. The End of the Yahwistic Work. Another basic problem brought about by the control of von Rad's scheme may be seen in the way the promise-fulfillment idea determines the end of the Yahwistic work. It is, of course, to be expected that evidence of a continuous theological plan might point to one particular theologian working within the biblical books, rather than

¹K. Barth, CD, III:1, 228ff.; III:3, 3, 6, 7.

²We refer here to an unpublished lecture delivered at Edinburgh University in November of 1970. Cf. Barr, Old and New, pp. 74ff.; ET, 73 (1961-62), pp. 142ff.

³OTT, I, 140.

⁴OTT, I, 138. Cf. I, 3, 5f., 122, 135, 166, 169, 170, 240; II, 104ff.

attention to style or vocabulary, but in von Rad's tracing of the history caused by the word of God a problem appears that is not to be dismissed lightly. In the J document this word by which the Yahwist sets the Heilsgeschichte in motion must be seen in connection with assigning of Judges 1 to J. This is a disputed point in critical studies.¹ (Von Rad admitted to us that if Judges 1 is not the work of J, the movement of promise to fulfillment in the Yahwistic work would be upset.) Here again von Rad's critical criteria is mainly theological. He seems to have made literary judgments primarily because the way he determines his promise-fulfillment scheme demands it.

3. The Place of the Psalms and Wisdom. Among other shortcomings of von Rad's method, both critical and theological, is the place it gives to portions of the Old Testament that do not appear to be directly related to Yahweh's acts in history. In his attempt to give the theological statement of literary units, i.e., bodies of tradition, he finds that the Psalms and Wisdom do not offer a closed body of traditions. Furthermore, their relationship to history is not always very evident. In the case of the Deuteronomistic historical work and that of the Chronicler he can develop these bodies of traditions under a common theological heading "Israel's Anointed," although this already shows the theological intention of his critical work, but when he comes to the Psalms and Wisdom he must solve his problem by subjecting them to his exclusive Heilsgeschichte approach and speaking of them as Israel's answer to the historical acts, placing

¹G. W. Anderson, A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament (London, 1966), p. 66.

them over against the traditions of the Heilsgeschichte.¹ Christoph Barth has made a timely criticism, pointing out that inasmuch as an answer follows a word issued we cannot avoid the troubling logical conclusion that historical traditions must play the part of words, namely the revelation of Yahweh. Actually, suggesting such a theological category as answer to the historical acts would make it necessary to consider the entire Old Testament as Israel's answer to the historical acts.²

Subjecting the Psalms and Wisdom to an exclusive Heilsgeschichte approach scarcely seems adequate in light of the rich theological content of the Psalter and the fact that Wisdom not only has a place in the Old Testament canon, but is integrated with and in fact permeates much of the other Old Testament materials. G. W. Anderson says of the Psalter:

The Psalter is the supremely representative theological document of the Old Testament precisely because in it you see most sharply not only the available material but also the problems which have to be faced in any attempt at a theological interpretation of the Old Testament.³

Professor Anderson also points out that whatever literary unit one considers

¹In his new work on Wisdom, Wisdom in Israel (Nashville & New York, 1972), von Rad appears to have broken the pattern of handling Wisdom as Israel's answer to the old traditions or acts; at least there is a notable reluctance on his part to discuss such connections as he did in his Old Testament Theology with the view of comparing them with this new position he apparently has taken. In this new book, Wisdom is presented "soteriologically." Salvation is not brought here by Yahweh's intervention in history, but by "specific factors inherent in creation itself" (p. 314). Von Rad admits that from the perspective of the traditional ideas of cult and salvatio-historical decrees this appears almost heretical and appears to present a theological tension within Yahwism.

²EvTh, 23 (1963), pp. 368f. See also C. Barth, "Die Antwort Israels," Probleme Biblischer Theologie, ed. by H. W. Wolff (München, 1971), pp. 44ff.

³"Israel's Creed: Sung, Not Signed," SJT, 16 (1963), p. 283.

in the Old Testament one hears its voice in the Psalter. This has important consequences for Wisdom, for in the Psalter the place of Wisdom is assured.¹

There is much in the Old Testament that does not refer back to the historical datum which is equally theological material, whether conversation or instruction, and presenting it as if it must have some direct relationship to the historical acts tends to distort it.² By any consideration von Rad appears to have separated Wisdom too far from the narrative texts to give it an adequate treatment. However, we do recognize that the collected works of Wisdom demand different questions than mere elements of wisdom in the narrative material. His traditio-historical method working under the presupposition of a history-centered revelation, however, is not comprehensive enough to do justice to all the important theological materials in the

¹On the basis of Professor Anderson's comments (*ibid.*), it would seem that the place the Psalms occupy in von Rad's theology is an inadequate one, and that he would have widened the scope of his theological task had he given the Psalter more importance theologically. His exclusive concentration on the Heilsgeschichte has been done at the expense of varying elements in the Old Testament. Yet in the Psalter all the main literary streams come together, and all the central theological themes are represented. This book embodies not only the contents of the old Credo, but its scope takes far more into consideration and makes one aware of what must be taken into account in an Old Testament theology. The Psalter also makes one aware of how Religionsgeschichte impinges on the theological enterprise. To mention one example, the Psalter cannot be properly understood without making reference to the nature and history of the cult. More attention would have had to be paid to delineating the nature of the unity of the Old Testament if von Rad had given adequate attention to the fact that all the diverse testimonies in the Psalter do attain a unity. These themes, which were the outgrowth of the Israelite religion in its development, have been gathered together in the Psalter and presented not in an abstract way, or a carefully prepared statement, but in the prayers and praises of generations of the worshipping community. The unity of the Psalter is thus an organic unity given it by a worshipping community.

²J. Barr points out that following this concept of relating everything to revelation in history "means that the central interpretative guide for a quite substantial literature is something which not only is not explicit therein, but something the explicitness of which would completely alter the nature and direction of this current of thought" (Old and New, p. 73).

Old Testament. The Joseph story is a point for consideration. There is a definite presence of wisdom in these narratives. Von Rad develops this idea himself, but the story of Joseph is a part of the patriarchal narratives, and the wisdom themes hardly seem to have any relation to Israel's answer to the historical traditions. Where in von Rad's work do we find an attempt to reconcile these wisdom themes with the way he treats the major wisdom literature? Cannot we see in the totality of the wisdom expressions an element which we might speak of as revelation, but which is not dependent on the concept of a historical revelation? It appears that von Rad almost comes to this in his discussion of the Joseph stories as a part of wisdom literature. It appears he is unconcerned with whether anything actually happened as recounted in the Book of Genesis. This presents a further problem when we realize that the statement "you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good," reaches its fulfillment in the New Testament with Christ's passion. Are we to consider the category of history in this connection, or are we to assume that the topic spoken of here is an illustration of God's providence which doesn't need it?¹

4. Skepticism and Apocalyptic. His approach also makes it necessary to treat skepticism,² apocalyptic, and post-exilic legal piety

¹Cf. the critique of N. Porteous, ASTI, 8 (1970-71), pp. 32f.

²R. Davidson, "Some Aspects of the Theological Significance of Doubt in the Old Testament," ASTI, 7 (1970), pp. 41ff., has pointed out that a weakness of all theologies of the Old Testament to this date is the scarcity of attention paid to skepticism. Themes about the love of God, faith in God, fear of God, etc., are abundant, but very little is said about questioning God. The imbalance is due to two factors: (a) the emphasis on the history-centered nature of Old Testament faith; and (b) the Hebrew Greek contrast. Davidson asserts that being critical of the presuppositions of faith is a necessary task, and states that while not all doubt is creative, a certain kind of doubt has some necessary and healthful place in the development of the doctrine of God.

critically, for here we have no basis in the historical traditions. Because apocalyptic is not connected with the Heilsgeschichte, it is separated from prophecy, which is dependent on the old tradition for its analogous form of prediction; consequently von Rad sees the origins of apocalyptic in the wisdom tradition.¹ Post-exilic legal piety is without value for his scheme

¹Von Rad's narrow thesis has been criticized by P. Vielhauer in E. Hennecke, New Testament Apocrypha, ed. by W. Schneemelcher, Eng. trans. ed. by R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia, 1965), II, 596ff.; and P. von der Osten-Sacken, Die Apokalyptik in ihrem Verhältnis zur Prophetie und Weisheit, Theologische Existenz Heute, 157 (München, 1969). Vielhauer argues that because the wisdom literature lacks elements of eschatology and imminent expectation, von Rad's thesis of the exclusive rootage of apocalyptic in the wisdom tradition is not feasible. Von der Osten-Sacken suggests that we are to look to Second Isaiah and the Enthronement Psalms for the spiritual rootage of the apocalyptic determinism of Dan. 2. Moreover, the traditio-historical basis for understanding the apocalyptic scheme of Dan. 2 is also to be found in Second Isaiah. Dan. 7:8-12, then, also draws on this idea of divine determinism, and the eschatological terminology in Dan. 8-12 is traceable to the prophetic literature, especially the Day of Yahweh tradition. The determinism found in Wisdom is not concerned with history involving politics and nations moving towards a goal, but relates to individuals and natural occurrences.

Von Rad had opportunity to take stock of these views. Vielhauer is cited in the latest edition of Theologie des Alten Testaments, and both Vielhauer and von der Osten-Sacken in his new book, Wisdom in Israel. In the latter work he counters Vielhauer's view that the fundamental element in apocalyptic is the eschatological, while the wisdom elements are additional. Von Rad admits that individual apocalypses may give this impression, but that from the perspective of traditio-historical criticism the "wisdom element is the fundamental one" (p. 278). In this same work he admits that the element of determinism is pre-apocalyptic, thus confirming von der Osten-Sacken's argument, but counters by questioning if the deterministic ideas in Ps. 139:16, Hab. 2:3, and Ezk. 2:9 were "actually understood in this way" (p. 282). The presence of such ideas may suggest only that these ideas were available in Israel, but he affirms that the preaching of the prophets had no influence on these concepts, yet with the post-exilic prophets there "may have" been a "slight change" towards these ideas (*ibid.*).

Other significant views that counter von Rad's position are: P. D. Hanson, "Old Testament Apocalyptic Reexamined," Int, 25 (1971), pp. 454ff.; "Jewish Apocalyptic Against Its Near Eastern Environment," RBib, 78 (1971), pp. 31ff. F. B. Vawter, "Apocalyptic: Its Relationship to Prophecy," CBQ, 22 (1960), pp. 33ff. See also J. Barr, Old and New, p. 126.

because it leads to Judaism. This perhaps throws light on why the priestly scheme does not seem to have the same standing theologically as the Deuteronomistic theology of history. Yet we must ask the question of von Rad if the priestly program does not deserve equal consideration with that of the Deuteronomist. Von Rad has not justified his use of the Deuteronomistic theology of history as a theological guide to the Old Testament. His linear course of history moving between promise and fulfillment has no room for the universal view of history contained in apocalyptic either.¹ He is concerned only with the way the word of God functioned in history and so excludes the possibility of developing a total view of the historical process.²

5. Exposition of the Prophets. When we look at von Rad's exposition of the prophets we see a few drawbacks in his historico-theological method quite clearly. (a) In Vol. II he has separated the prophetic traditions from the historical traditions in Vol. I. The reason for this is that "they deny the efficacy of the old divine actions for their contemporaries, and that they perceive God's rising up to completely new acts in history in their time."³ The title makes it appear as if he is no longer concerned with events in the second volume. (b) His traditio-historical method brings him to emphasize the point that the prophets were inheritors of old tradition to the place that they are made almost entirely dependent on traditional

¹M. Honecker confirms this point (EvTh, 33 [1963], p. 148).

²W. Pannenberg is the major figure advocating a concept of apocalyptic universalism which develops a universal historical scheme. See "Redemptive Event and History," EOTH, pp. 314ff.; "Kerygma und Geschichte," Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen, ed. by R. Rendtorff and K. Koch, (Neukirchen, 1961), pp. 129ff. [hereafter Studien]; W. Pannenberg, ed., Revelation as History (New York, 1968).

thought forever. This minimizes the prophetic experience and new insights gained on the basis of it. (c) He nearly ignores the call and commissioning of the prophets by Yahweh, which often comes as a theophany, as a prophetic tradition because of his emphasis on the traditions that are analogous to those of the Heilsgeschichte.¹ The prophetic traditions are classified via form-critical analysis as a witness to the words and acts of Yahweh. These traditions also have an intervention of Yahweh in history as their subject, and so the task for theology is the message of the prophets in their respective historical positions. However, in sharply separating the prophetic traditions from the historical traditions on the basis of the prophetic attitude towards the old saving acts, von Rad seems to make a separation between the prophetic books and the rest of the Old Testament that is unmerited.²

Von Rad is committed to the idea that the only way the prophets could

¹The minimizing of the prophetic experience is singled out by C. Barth, EvTh, 23 (1963), p. 371, for criticism. He points out that the prophets are themselves the results of divine intervention, are even mentioned in connection with the recapitulation of the divine history. These are events in the Heilsgeschichte, perhaps even the basic material of the prophetic traditions. Von Rad gives the impression that by itself the prophetic movement and message is essentially concerned with Israel's piety and a history of her faith. Cf. N. Porteous, ASTI, 8 (1970), p. 34: "While this is so the idea of the prophets inheriting old traditions, however, it is not necessary that we should rush to the opposite extreme and make the prophets entirely dependent on tradition and on traditional forms of thought. It is the tradition that to some extent is under suspicion and so there may well be a sort of tactical advantage in having a look at the prophetic experience, not in the first instance to see what use they make of the tradition, but from the point of view of the fresh insight they were given into the purposes of God."

²Vriezen counters von Rad's position by stating that it cannot be held that the prophets broke with the past Heilsgeschichte, seeing salvation as a mere hope for the future (see above, p. 199). N. Porteous, in a very restrained manner, makes a similar observation: "One is probably justified in emphasizing the continuity even more strongly than von Rad does . . ." (ASTI, 8 [1970-71], p. 34).

make material statements about a future that would involve God was to project the old traditions into the future. This is an eschatologizing of the concept of history. It is by maintaining that the future work of Yahweh will be analogous to God's former work, while at the same time viewing the old historical bases of salvation null and void, that von Rad arrives at his view of eschatology.¹ The eschatologizing thought of the prophets is interpreted, however, with the help of the Deuteronomistic theology of history, thus a link is maintained with the old Heilsgeschichte. The old acts of God are projected into the future; they will become prophecies of new saving events. The prophecied future acts will be analogous to the old traditions. This idea controls which events in the future will be "proper" saving events, i.e., those fulfilling the prediction by being analogous to the old traditions of the Heilsgeschichte. This position seems restrictive.²

The scheme of analogous prediction comes close to suggesting that Israel's history is prophecy of the future.³ The idea of prophecy takes on

¹See R. E. Clements, Prophecy and Covenant (London, 1965), pp. 103ff., for a discussion of the subject of prophetic eschatology and the attendant problems related to its formulation. Cf. C. R. North, "The 'Former Things' and the 'New Things,'" Studies in Old Testament Prophecy, ed. by H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh, 1950), pp. 111ff.

²The idea of "proper" saving events which are concerned with Yahweh's intervention in history tends to minimize the other activities of God in history, e.g., the act of Yahweh stirring up Cyrus (OTT, II, 244). One should also consider the effect this view has on other interventions of God in history, as in the case of I Kings 22:20ff. where a lying spirit is sent from Yahweh to the false prophets, and this changes the course of history.

³See OTT, II, 299. Israel's history as prophecy, rather than the words of the Old Testament, was advocated by J. C. K. von Hofmann in the nineteenth century (see R. Bultmann, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," EOTH, p. 58). See J. Barr's list of theologians he feels hold to this view (Old and New, p. 123). What we have pointed out here is somewhat different from these views. But this idea of Israel's history as prophecy seems inherent in the theologies constructed around a theology of promise.

a characteristic that does not actually seem to come from the Old Testament understanding of prophecy itself.¹ The old tradition takes on a prophetic or predictive character. The old had prophetic significance for the prophets and was important in pointing towards new actions of Yahweh.

Von Rad places a great deal of importance on the idea that when the prophets abolished the old saving acts the Heilsgeschichte came to an end. On closer examination, the grounds on which von Rad establishes the conclusion that the Heilsgeschichte came to an end in the exile are productive of a tautology, just as was the case in suggesting that Creation had to be seen first as a saving act before it could be attached to the Heilsgeschichte. The case in point here is that we know the Heilsgeschichte came to an end because the prophets abolished the old saving acts, while at the same time the prophets abolished the old saving acts because the Heilsgeschichte had come to an end. We question whether this emphasis on the end of the Heilsgeschichte is very helpful. Similarly, we doubt that the statement that the prophets stood outside the Heilsgeschichte is necessary. It exists only because of von Rad's particular understanding of history and his particular theological understanding of the prophetic attitude towards the old acts of

¹J. Barr has been critical of those who understand the history of the Old Testament as prophecy while not giving enough attention to the words of the Old Testament (Old and New, p. 123). He has also called to account those who ignore the prophet and verbal communication because of their emphasis on revelation through history (*ibid.*, pp. 73ff.; "Revelation Through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology," Int, 17 [1963], pp. 193-205; New Theology No. 1, ed. by M. E. Marty and D. Peerman New York, 1964, pp. 60ff.). N. Porteous has also suggested the consideration of word as well as deed in theological writing, cautiously in "Magnalia Dei," Probleme Biblischer Theologie, pp. 417ff. (hereafter Probleme), and more vigorously in ASTI, 8 (1970-71), pp. 21ff., especially lecture III.

God in history. The prophetic denial of the saving efficacy of the old acts to their contemporaries does not necessarily mean that the Heilsgeschichte was at an end.¹ The prophetic books do not give the impression of a complete break with the old saving acts. Neither need we understand that the exile was devoid of Heilsgeschichte. There is no time without Heilsgeschichte.

6. The Problem of Retelling. Apart from the problem that one might be guilty of retelling something that never happened, and the observation of J. Barr that a discussion of concepts like righteousness, time, etc., seems to contradict von Rad's stated purpose to retell the Heilsgeschichte,² another serious problem appears for von Rad's claim that retelling the Heilsgeschichte is the most legitimate way of theological discourse. It should be noted that when speaking of retelling the Heilsgeschichte, von Rad means retelling it via the traditio-historical method, by tracing the transmission and combination of the traditions.³ In the first volume of his theology he

¹Besides the material found in von Rad's Old Testament Theology, two other essays are important in considering the question of the continuity of the Heilsgeschichte from the traditio-historical point of view. These are: M. Noth's Überlieferungsgeschichte Studien (Halle, 1943), Chapter A, Sec. C, Part 13, pp. 142ff., especially pp. 149ff., where he holds that history closed for Israel and there was no hope for the future; and H. W. Wolff's "Kerygma der deuteronomischen Geschichtswerk," Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament (München, 1964), pp. 308ff., especially pp. 317ff. Wolff states that the offer to return to Yahweh with heart and soul should be seen as a turn to a new phase of the Heilsgeschichte.

²ET, 73 (1961-62), pp. 142ff.

³It becomes apparent when one traces through von Rad's description of the Heilsgeschichte that he has actually given us a description of the history of the tradition. Baumgärtel criticizes von Rad on this point (ThLZ, 86 [1961], p. 811). See also K. Koch, KuD, 8 (1962), p. 107, n. 25. H. J. Kraus, Die Biblische Theologie, p. 138, asks: "Wie verhalten sich Überlieferungsgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte zueinander? Ist die Heilsgeschichte de facto--Überlieferungsgeschichte?"

presents two major sections: "The Theology of the Hexateuch," and "Israel's Anointed." He perceives that the Hexateuch has been built up around an old confession composed of saving events in that confession.¹ But when he comes to the Deuteronomistic theology of history and the work of the Chronicler in the second section, he changes over to a pure traditio-historical presentation and presents the subjects: covenant with David, Saul and Judges. This raises the question of whether the development of the theological statements of each body of traditions which concerns retelling the facts of salvation is appropriate. We are in an apparently impossible position to know how we are to retell the Heilsgeschichte after recognizing this fact.² But, apart from the fact that we are left wondering how retelling should proceed, this method of theological discourse which traces the historical development of the traditions is closer to Introduction than to Old Testament theology. We feel, with C. Barth, that the investigation and description of literary units belongs to Introduction and not to Old Testament theology.³

¹Von Rad states: "To have to abandon an historical presentation of Israel's credal statements has the advantage that we are able to let the material stand in those contexts in the saving history in which it was arranged by Israel" (OTT, I, vi). This he does because of his idea that the creed actually summoned Israel into existence (OTT, I, 6f.).

²The question of whether the Hexateuch is an independent theological unit as the development of the old Credo, or whether it is to be evaluated in a literary sense as a body of traditions as in the Deuteronomistic historical work and the Chronicler's work is still a subject of debate among proponents of the history-of-traditions method of investigation. See E. Jenni, "Zwei Jahrzehnte Forschung an den Buchern Joshua bis Konige," ThR, 27 (1961), pp. 97ff., especially 144ff.

³EvTh, 23 (1963), p. 372. Von Rad holds that there is a mutual intersection between Introduction and Theology (OTT, I, v).

The theological discipline has, among other things, the task of unfolding the saving facts, but is this not best done as von Rad has done in the Hexateuch by following the sequence of the traditions as we find them now and relating this to her tradition building and the critical history? Baumgärtel has made a significant point about von Rad's retelling when he points out that von Rad is so concerned with showing Israel's struggle with reinterpretation and making the old acts relevant that he all but ignores the struggle God has with his people, his messengers, and his self-actualization through the means at his disposal.¹ Von Rad needs to be more theocentric; he needs a more satisfactory idea of revelation. We must have more than a phenomenological understanding of the Old Testament.² The traditio-historical method can only help us understand the relation between the Testaments phenomenologically. It can never solve the problem of the meaning of

¹The disintegration of the picture of Moses is also brought about by the application of the traditio-historical method which emphasizes the importance of institutions, communities and practices rather than the creativity of individuals in the way a particular religion evolves. The big question remains, however, concerning the competence of any method that dispenses with individual creativity as a force in founding Israel's religion. Cf. F. Baumgärtel, "Der Tod des Religionsstifters," *KuD*, 9 (1963), pp. 223ff.

²If Israel is only describing her "experiences" at a present time or her history with Yahweh by means of historical traditions which do not intend to tell us about their subjects--Abraham, for instance, or the Exodus--but the way Israel's faith describes its place at a moment in history, it is difficult for us to agree with von Rad when he says there is a real difference between this and a history-of-piety or a history of the faith. If in the process of reinterpretation there is no thought given to the original meaning of the events in her traditions and they completely lose their primary content to contemporary experience or understanding, is not this essentially a statement of phenomenology of religions? Where in all this can we have a theological statement made that is dependent upon what happened in past history as a medium of revelation. We cannot remain content with von Rad's phenomenological employment of his method because he looks for the solution to the problem with theology in a separate view of history and not in methodology. We must give consideration to both.

Israel's confession for the Christian faith. The latter is essentially a theological question.

7. Time. While the centrality of the Heilsgeschichte in von Rad's theology places controls on varying elements in the Old Testament and controls his idea of history, the time factor of the Heilsgeschichte also controls the idea of time in Israel's history. This is open to objection. Von Rad holds that there was no linear sense of time in Israel in our modern Western sense of the word. The Hebrews could not evaluate a pure past or a pure future. Life was bound up in the rhythm of nature and cultic festivals. Thus it was the festival time that was filled time, or the "one and only" time, in the full sense of the word. Later on, a linear sense of time developed which eventually overshadowed the cultic view, but the idea of content being characteristic of time was never actually lost.

We may make several observations by way of objection to this exclusive understanding of time. (a) Because von Rad equates cult with festivals which were originally nature festivals but were later historicized, it seems that the rhythmic characterization of those festivals would be, to some degree, contradictory after historicization. (b) Is it not an open question whether or not Israel made past events absolutely present, or whether these events remain past events which are remembered, and that the presence of God is the force to be considered in relation to both past and present? This is not to deny the reliving of the events of the past in the cult, but it questions whether Israel made the past so absolutely present that she did not distinguish between the past and the present. (c) A view of time that describes the participation of people in past events but does not recognize the place of the events in history or the place of the participants in the

present is hardly an adequate exposition of the idea of time.¹ (d) Von Rad's idea that Israel did not have an idea of a linear time span like our own,² that she could not actually evaluate a pure past or a pure future does not seem justifiable. In his theology too many of the historical traditions extend into the future by way of the present, and vice versa, too many of the prophetic traditions are actually based on occurrences of the past to argue this view convincingly.³ It seems to us that this idea of time that is apparently not aware of a pure past or future reduces time to a stage of existence, and thus cannot represent an adequate concept of historical time.

¹See J. Wilch, who has made a study of this question in Time and Event (Leiden, 1966), pp. 12, 75, 170. "Even the cult did not attempt to actualize past events in the recitation of the creed or in the present performance of the ritual--that would be 'de-historicizing.' It only called them to mind with the concept of corporate personality and observed their memory because of the continuing effect of their consequences."

"Therefore, it is untenable that there be represented a concept of the actualization of past or future events in the present situation or that a confrontation with God may transpose man beyond the limits of time" (p. 170).

²J. Barr, Biblical Words for Time (Naperville, 1969), p. 32, objects to von Rad's characterization of Israel's concept of time being different from our own. Barr is not opposed to the idea that concepts of time different from our own existed in Israel, but he believes that some scholars go to unjustified lengths to establish the idea that time was only known by its content in Israel. See also Barr's Semantics of Biblical Language (London, 1962), pp. 72ff., where he analyzes the relation between linguistic phenomena and ways of thinking about time. Cf. B. L. Whorf, Language, Thought and Reality (New York, 1956), pp. 153ff. Whorf advances the position that concepts of time, space, substance, matter, etc. arise out of linguistic usage and are not possessed by everyone in the same form. They depend on the nature of the language or languages responsible for their development (pp. 153, 158). See also J. McIntyre's discussion on the categories of time in history, The Christian Doctrine of History (Grand Rapids, 1957), pp. 22ff.

³C. Barth also comments on this contradiction, EvTh, 23 (1963), pp. 369f.

E. The Relationship Between the Testaments

Von Rad employs the traditio-historical method to show how the Old Testament is related to the New Testament; thus he seeks connections between the Testaments in the historical process itself. One may observe a structural analogy between the saving events of both Testaments. Typology is used to put the analogies in theological perspective. The one basic analogy between the Testaments is God's saving work in the Old Testament and the Christ-event in the New Testament. Here is a fusion of typological and Christological methods.

While we are not denying the importance of typology as a means of finding the connections between the Testaments, von Rad's use of typology, which is actually a schematic connection imposed on the Heilsgeschichte, has a basic weakness in that von Rad refuses to subject the events in the Heilsgeschichte to historico-critical investigation. Thus, when he indicates that we must look in the history worked by God's word for places where the Christ-event is prefigured, the question arises as to whether these so-called divine events which are isolated from their historical contexts can adequately prefigure the concrete historical Christ-event. While von Rad seeks to regain reference to the facts attested in the New Testament, he actually seems to be concerned with working out the structural relatedness in the "experience" of God in the Old and New Testaments rather than the correspondence of basic Old Testament facts of history with characteristics of New Testament salvation.

But we need not exclude typology as a means of understanding the relationship between the Testaments because of disagreement with von Rad's position. While typology begins with a relationship in history, it is not

concerned with mere external similarities or with all the historical details, not is it concerned exclusively with finding the connections between the Testaments in the unity of historical facts; it seems more to find the connection between the Testaments in structural similarities.¹ While the course of history which unites type and antitype tends to point out their differences, only exclusive concern with typology in terms of a historical process would tend to negate its use. The conceptual means of typological correspondence also has a place in prefiguring the Christ-event. The approach rests on various elements in the Old Testament that correspond with the substance of the New Testament or a New Testament situation. But the conceptual means of typological analogy is not adequate to do full justice to the Old Testament. One special connection cannot be sufficient to cover all the relationships between man and the Bible, so other approaches will be needed to complement the typological one.²

¹For a discussion of the problems and assets of the methodology von Rad employs see: H. W. Wolff, "Hermeneutics of the Old Testament," EOTH, pp. 160ff.; "The Understanding of History in the Old Testament Prophets," EOTH, pp. 336ff.; W. Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method," EOTH, pp. 224ff. Cf. M. Noth, "The 'Re-presentation' of the Old Testament in Proclamation," EOTH, pp. 76ff.; J. Bright, The Authority of the Old Testament (Nashville, 1967), pp. 194ff.; and Barr, Old and New, pp. 103ff.; Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology (1970), pp. 97, 136f.

²There are theologians who do not find typology acceptable. Baumgärtel, Hesse and J. Barr are examples. Baumgärtel's and Hesse's positions have already been given in Chapter Three. Barr's argument against typology lies in its close relationship to the idea of revelation in history. While typology is supposed to be based on historical correspondences and allegory is non-historical, Barr feels that the way typology and allegory are used in the New Testament does not justify the attempt to separate them (Old and New, pp. 103ff.). Baumgärtel stresses the superior position of the New Testament and distorted nature of the Old Testament history to the degree

that the significance of the Old Testament is practically negated and history is grounded solely in the Incarnation. Similarly, Hesse perceives the differences between the Testaments to be so great that there is a brokenness in the relation between them. Pannenberg criticizes Baumgärtel's position by pointing out that "the historicity of Jesus Christ falls when the history of Israel falls" (EOTH, p. 326). This criticism may also be applied to Hesse. Despite the differences, the positions of Baumgärtel and Hesse suggest similarities to that of Bultmann ("Prophecy and Fulfillment," EOTH, pp. 50ff.; "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," OTCF, pp. 8ff.), who sees no continuity between the Testaments because, as Pannenberg points out, "he does not begin with the promises and their structure which for Israel were the foundation of history" (EOTH, pp. 325f.). Bultmann overlooks the fact that promises endure in spite of change. Zimmerli also observes that although Bultmann wishes to maintain the historicity of the New Testament message, in removing it from its correspondence with Old Testament history and promise he actually removes it from history and ends up with a "Christ-myth" ("Promise and Fulfillment," EOTH, pp. 119f.). Baumgärtel, although recognizing the continuance of the "basic-promise," rejects proof from prophecy as being unacceptable for our modern historical consciousness. Hesse is also in agreement with these points. Thus both men stand in danger of isolating the message of Christ from history. It is difficult to perceive how Old Testament prophecy, or promise, can be unacceptable for our modern historical consciousness while affirming the message of Christ which is the fulfillment.

B. S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia, 1970), has advocated a new program for theology based on his dissatisfaction with the dominant concern for the historical question. He suggests that biblical theology must take place within the context of the Christian canon. There should be a two-way conversation between the Testaments. This does not mean that historico-critical work is to be ignored, but critical work should show how God spoke and worked with the community of faith in past history. Childs thus wants a dialectical relationship between the Testaments based on the principle that when the original meaning of a text is discovered, conversation between it and the later understandings of the text and the emergent tradition may take place (p. 111). The fact that the Testaments stand in a canonical unity means that each adds something to the other by virtue of this unity. In principle this is productive of a method of comparing scripture with scripture, only now one is able to employ historico-critical principles. Childs' procedure is actually seeing the unity of the Testaments by understanding how the New Testament makes use of the Old. This seems to depart from the attempt of the promise and fulfillment scheme which tries to see how the Old Testament leans towards the New Testament or anticipates it. Yet Childs believes that understanding how God was at work before Christ is beneficial to comprehending what he did in Christ.

IV. Summary

The following points have been determined from the preceding analysis:

1. The religio-historical and systematic approaches have certain basic weaknesses:
 - a. Religio-historical accounts and systematic accounts of Israel's religion have tended to give the historical perspective a dominant position, while the theological perspective is sometimes slighted.
 - b. The systematic approach employing a unifying formula may be guilty of making contrary material fit, producing a certain distortion of the biblical material.
2. Von Rad's method is basically a protest against allowing the historical perspective to dominate the theological viewpoint and the rationalistic systematization of the biblical material under a unifying basic concept.
3. Von Rad's traditio-historical method has certain weaknesses:
 - a. It attempts to separate the Heilsgeschichte from the history of Israel's religion, yet in constructing his critical picture of the history he does it in the interest of his theological presentation. Thus, his stated purpose is not accomplished.
 - b. The disjunction of the disciplines makes it seem impossible to understand what historical experiences are contained in Israel's theological picture without attempting to recreate them from the critical section and von Rad's earlier essays.
 - c. His concentration on the events of the old Credo and future analogies brings him to overlook the event of God's confrontation with the prophet as perhaps the primary element in the prophetic tradition and ignore it as a salvatio-historical event. It also brings him to exclude the exile from salvatio-historical considerations.

- d. The prophetic relationship to the old acts of salvation as abolished and yet valid in their antitypical sense is bridged by reverting to semantics.
 - e. The traditio-historical method looks on fragments as primary and tends to see no unity of the revelational acts. This view tends to ignore the center of the Old Testament.
 - f. While claiming to avoid Israel's thought world, he has not actually done so.
5. The Heilsgeschichte perspective of von Rad's traditio-historical presentation tends to become a control test of the biblical material because it tends to show the "proper" relationship of the material to the Heilsgeschichte.
6. His attempt to retell the Heilsgeschichte contains a basic problem in knowing whether to develop the saving facts traditio-historically or follow an already established Heilsgeschichte such as the old Credo.
7. His exclusive concentration on Heilsgeschichte places controls on the understanding of time in Israel. This is open to objection. It seems that this idea could reduce time to a stage of existence and thus would be inadequate for a historical view of time.
8. Von Rad's attempt to delineate the relationship between the Testaments by the traditio-historical method finds a structural analogy between them. He employs typology to put the analogies in theological perspective. He seeks to regain reference to the facts attested in the New Testament, but actually seems to be concerned with working out the structural relatedness in the "experience" of God in the Old and New Testaments rather than correspondences of basic Old Testament facts of

history with characteristics of New Testament salvation.

9. Typology need not be abandoned because of the way it is sometimes used, but it will have to be used in combination with other approaches for understanding the relationship between the Testaments.

V. Concluding Remarks

It becomes evident from a study of the history of biblical theology that the movement grew out of the rationalistic tendencies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹ Although progress in separating Old Testament theology from these philosophical foundations was made with Eichrodt's theology, his dominating concern for the historical perspective, Israel's ideas, and a systematic approach governed by a central organizing concept still seem to betray a certain attachment to those philosophical currents. Because the biblical theologian is not philosophically trained to deal adequately with these problems, he should seek the services of the philosopher to make the origins of biblical theology clear, assess its present presuppositions and goals, and criticize its intellectual structure. The biblical theologian who chooses to continue working in the traditional manner will then have to either choose to ignore the philosophical frame-

¹E. Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 11, mentions how biblical theology only began to develop independently of dogmatics with the demands of rationalism in the eighteenth century and so developed in opposition to the traditions of Orthodoxy. It is important to note the statement of H. Schultz: "In a description of this progress, the one really instructive fact is this, that it was only through the gradual giving up of the conviction as to the perfect harmony between the teaching of the Bible and the Church that this science of ours could obtain a start and acquire a position of growing importance . . ." (Old Testament Theology Edinburgh, 1898 , I, 79).

work of his theology or learn to handle it knowingly.¹ It may be that no theology of any kind is possible without philosophy.

While historical study in various forms has proven to be invaluable in discovering the author's meaning and has prevented biblical conceptuality from becoming a formulation of modern thought,² historical criticism has set up such a barrier between the past and the present that it is difficult to move beyond the historical meaning of the text to the meaning it has for today.³ This seems to be a major source of the problem concerning whether Old Testament theology should be purely descriptive or normative.⁴ Although Old Testament studies are by nature the study of a body of literature--an admission that in the case of other bodies of literature would involve the question of values and truth--the religious nature of the Old Testament suggested that any such concerns in this literature might present the threat of normative dogmatics. Thus, Old Testament study was assimilated to the exact sciences, especially historical research. It is no surprise then that the discussion of whether biblical theology, which is so closely associated with the historical discipline, should be descriptive or normative suggests similarities to the problem of the differences between Historie

¹F. Sontag, RIL, 33 (1964), pp. 224ff.

²Ibid., p. 228. Cf. J. C. Beker, "Reflections on Biblical Theology," Int, 24 (1970), pp. 303ff.

³B. S. Childs, op. cit., pp. 141f.

⁴See the essays: K. Stendahl, "Method in the Study of Biblical Theology"; A. Dulles, "Response to Krister Stendahl's 'Method in the Study of Biblical Theology,'" in The Bible in Modern Scholarship, ed. by P. Hyatt (Nashville, 1965), pp. 196-216.

and Geschichte.¹ These two words for history represent the questions: What actually happened in the past as determined from the perspective of the historico-critical method; and what does the past mean to me as it confronts and determines me in my historical existence? This problem does not seem to be specifically theological, for when any significant confrontation with a historical document is made, Historie and Geschichte seem to fall apart. It would appear that the general problem of the relationship between these two different concerns for history should be solved before faith's use of history can be adequately clarified.

Changes of attitude towards the capabilities of historical research have occurred with the recognition that as soon as the discipline goes beyond scrutinizing small details into wider views of history, exactitude is impossible. This has brought the historical discipline itself close to humanistic study with its concern for living value and abiding truth rather than identifying it with purely scientific studies. The discipline of the history of Israel's religion has also developed a respect for the totality of a religion as a living consciousness instead of being concerned with fragmenting the totality into facts that are merely a stage on the way to becoming something else. These changes in religio-historical studies bring the study of the history of Israel's religion more in line with the syntheic interest of Old Testament theology, that interest being one of the meaning of facts in a recognizable whole.²

¹A. Dulles, op. cit., p. 210.

²J. Barr, "Old Testament Theology and the History of Religion," CanJTh, 3 (1957), pp. 144f.

While it may appear that as a search for meaning Old Testament theology has already gone beyond a purely descriptive science, it would appear to us that for Old Testament theology to be all that the name seems to imply it must go beyond a purely descriptive function. It should go beyond a mere description of Israel's religion as a faith in God's activity in history. The Old Testament theologian should attempt to understand the Old Testament from within, from the perspective of faith, rather than from an entirely detached point of view. It would seem that to speak of the spiritual values of Israel's faith, a faith centered in God's acts in history, while obscuring the question of the reality of those acts is to raise a doubt about the adequacy of those spiritual values when possibly the faith that contains them was based on an illusion. While it is not possible to verify the activity of God in history by the historico-critical method, establishing the factuality of the events confessed as manifesting that activity is subject to such verification. We should not suppress the possibility of God's activity in history as the nineteenth-century historical method seems to have done; rather we would prefer that the methodological question be left open regarding such activity. As believers, our own receptivity to the activity of God in history hinges on a widened scope of historical understanding and elevates the question of historical knowledge to a metaphysical dimension of meaning. And we feel that it is only when this metaphysical dimension is recognized that the knowledge process can be brought to completion. It is with this understanding that the task of Old Testament theology should be aligned.

It is to von Rad's credit that he emphasizes the centrality of the Heilsgeschichte, although in so doing he does not do justice to non-conforming

elements of the Old Testament. But his protest against a systematic presentation seems to be carried too far. While his rejection of a "center" for the Old Testament as a speculative philosophical principle is to be taken seriously, in rejecting it he has left us with a multiplicity of theologies and heterogeneous revelatory acts.¹ Is it possible to go from the phenomena which are many to a unity which is theological? Apparently we must, but how we are to do so is another question.² If the Old Testament is to make a contribution to dogmatics, it should be to some degree systematic in its form of presentation.

Traditionally, in systematic presentations it has been basic to choose some principle of selection whereby the diverse biblical materials are unified. The idea of selectivity of the subject matter has proven to be a difficult problem because of the diversity of the subject matter, some of which the principle tends to reject or distort. The scope of an Old Testament theology should be no narrower than the totality of the texts which claim to speak of or for God. Professor G. W. Anderson's comment on the Psalter being, in a sense, the first Old Testament theology and still having the ingredients of a modern one merits careful consideration here.³

¹C. Barth, EvTh, 23 (1963), p. 372, calls on von Rad to find a center and a way of expressing the different traditions' witness to it. Von Rad's problem lies in his failure to make this theology theocentric, a task made impossible by the phenomenological utilization of his method. We can affirm that God is the center of the Old Testament in terms of its central concept without being guilty of trying to confine the event-centered mode of his revelation into a system.

²See the critique of U. Simon, "Old Testament Balance Sheets," CQR, 167 (1966), p. 244.

³SJTh, 16 (1963), pp. 277ff.

The Psalter is the confluence of not only all the literary streams of the Old Testament, but also the major theological themes: election, covenant, Heilsgeschichte, etc. These are all held together by the fact that this book is a confession. Its unity is the organic unity given to it by a worshiping community, not the formal unity given by a carefully constructed statement of Israel's faith. The book gathers together the themes which were dominant throughout the development of Israel's religion and expresses them in prayers and praises. The comprehensive selection of theological material in the book that may be found elsewhere in the Old Testament offers the theologian protection from choosing a distorting or misleading principle of selection for his theological endeavor. The Psalter also offers a theological synthesis, not in a systematic sense, but in the sense that over the centuries Israel confessed God, and from within the context of her life of worship she made a selection and concentration of theological material. The theologian must make a thematic synthesis himself, for this the Psalter does not do, but if in his theological task he allows the Psalter to guide him, he will avoid the dangers arising from a systematizing principle that is external to the nature and purpose of the Old Testament literature itself.

The idea of taking a crosscut through the thought world of Israel and employing a central concept as a unifying agent should perhaps be avoided for several reasons: (a) The Old Testament resists such systematization. Revelation involving the divine acts includes the confessional recital of those acts and the inferences and deductions made from them by a worshipping community in their individual historical situations, thus this type of revelation cannot be systematized; (b) The method is not compre-

hensive enough to include all the variety of Old Testament thought; (c) It does not achieve its intended theological goals because of its attention to the historical content of theology. Perhaps as an alternative to this method the various themes and theologies should be allowed to stand with all their contrasts and similarities in the various documents according to their historical development without attempting to unify them with a single structuring concept or theme. An attempt could then be made to reveal the inner theological unity that holds them together in as much as they claim to speak of or for God. In this way we would be less apt to distort or neglect important theological materials, but would take the relationship of the themes to history seriously and give the theological perspective its due. An attempt to synthesize the material would be made; but one would not be working toward a consensus, be trying to solve all the difficult problems once and for all, or be attempting to find a perfect and final scheme of organization. The adequacy of the organization would be determined by the material itself.

The fact that a religious community united both Old and New Testaments in the Christian canon necessitates considering the Old Testament in relation to its broader canonical context. An approach to the relationship between the Testaments should be sufficiently comprehensive to avoid the basic mistake of attempting to explain all the details of the many different testimonies in the Bible by a single point of view. No single approach has proven sufficient to explain the rich variety of relations between man and God in the Bible. Neither typology nor the scheme of promise and fulfillment are sufficient by themselves to encompass everything in the relation between the Testaments. An adequate approach to the question of the rela-

tionship between the Testaments would necessitate allowing for a number of connections, such as typology and the Old Testament as a preparation for the New, without neglecting the questions of continuity and discontinuity, similarity and contrast. Only by a comprehensive approach to the question of the unity of the Testaments can we express the historical and organic connections without doing violence to the texts.¹

¹See Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology (1970), pp. 100, 137f. Cf. J. Bright, The Authority of the Old Testament, pp. 192ff.

CHAPTER FIVE

CRITIQUE OF THE CONCEPTS OF HISTORY IN OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

I. The Problem of the Two Versions of the History

Von Rad affirms that the self-revelation of God occurs in history. This refers to Israel's experiences in history with Yahweh. In Israel's early reports we do not have actual history, however, but only the cultic creation and testimony from separate and diverse events which preceded the cultic witness. We have only cultic statements of Yahweh's acts as they were experiences and witnessed to in the cult. Because Israel's expressions of these experiences were by way of her historical traditions in both selection and combination, and these traditions--especially in the early period--were primarily sagas, he claims one cannot measure their value by modern methods of history writing because the centers of these reports are not in themselves. Israel, like other ancient peoples, did not give "authentic" reports of her history.¹ These stories have symbolic value; they are symbols

¹Whatever von Rad means by authenticity, "Authentischen" (ThLZ, 88 [1963], p. 410; cf. OTT, II, 419), the question here is not primarily authenticity of historical reports, but the centers of these reports. Do their contents refer to themselves? Is not the report of the battle of Ramses II with the Hittites, even though unauthentic, concerned with its own subject matter? Doesn't the Moabite stone tell of an act of Chemosh in history (Heilsgeschichte) that has its center in itself? Dentan's book, The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East (London, 1955), does not seem to find an ancient world so devoid of historical understanding as we may have believed. Cf. B. Albrektson, History and the Gods (Lund, 1968).

of Israel's history with God. Then too, historical criticism works without a God hypothesis.¹ Thus von Rad does not look for a methodological solution to the problem of the two histories; rather he chooses to allow the pictures to remain separate.

This position raises a problem when one considers that the Old Testament is concerned with history in the most everyday sense of the term. One need only glance at the pages of the Old Testament to see that it deals with politics, wars, economics, tyrannies, revolutions and counter-revolutions, cultural conflicts, taxes, etc. The accounts of the divine acts in history, even if some accounts have a legendary form, are a part of the same historical atmosphere as these more mundane affairs, and to discount the need to maintain the relations between the Heilsgeschichte and the historico-critical version leads one to question the adequacy of the decision to keep these two pictures of the history separate yet give each a scientific standing of its own. The matter is further complicated when we realize that separating the kerygmatic version from the historico-critical version does not mean that the kerygmatic picture is not rooted in actual history, but only that the events escape historico-critical investigation. We are thus, on the one hand, obliged to accept Israel's report of her history with God without bringing historico-critical principles to bear upon it, while on the other hand we are to understand that what she reports is rooted in real history. It is difficult to reconcile these positions von Rad has taken. He leaves us on the horns of a dilemma, and this situation seems to promote either closely identifying the Heilsgeschichte with the historico-critical version of the history or divorcing it from history altogether.

¹OTT, II, 418.

A. Evaluation of the Critics' Views

As we have seen, Eichrodt and more radically Hesse, Hempel and Maag have attacked the idea of the right to maintain two separate histories. They insist on the importance of what actually happened. Eichrodt appears to give only secondary consideration to the external events in history while concentrating on the encounter of God with men at a point in history through which the people of God is called into being. It is in the creating of the covenant relationship that the "decisive" event takes place. But this still does not exclude the necessity of reconciling the differences in both versions of the history in the interest of the reliability of the biblical witness.¹ However, one wonders if the emphasis on the divine encounter has reduced the centrality of the divine saving acts in their externality to the point that their significance as a means of revelation is put in question. If the peculiarity of these events lies only in their glorification due to the overmastering of the human spirit, we also have a problem concerning

¹The reliability of the biblical witness seems to be put in question by the manner in which the originally distinct traditions making up the Heilsgeschichte came together by being confessed in a central sanctuary; likewise, the origin of Yahwism is portrayed to have arisen without adequate cause but by the chance combination of various religious concepts coming from diverse backgrounds. Much of von Rad's hypothesis is built upon the presuppositions he holds about Israel's cult. Here his hypothesis is most vulnerable, because the nature of Israel's cult is not adequately known. G. E. Wright, ET, 71 (1960), pp. 292ff., has been especially critical of von Rad for not considering what Wright refers to as the superior data of archaeology in dealing with Israel's history. Also relevant to this question of cult and history are: G. E. Wright, "Cult and History," Int, 16 (1962), pp. 3ff.; and J. Bright, Early Israel in Recent History Writing (London, 1956). The following essays in The Bible in Modern Scholarship, ed. by P. Hyatt (Nashville, 1967), are also of importance: Arvid S. Kapelrud, "The Role of the Cult in Old Israel;" Bruce Vawter, "Response to Arvid S. Kapelrud's 'The Role of the Cult in Old Israel';" Herbert G. May, "Response to Arvid S. Kapelrud's 'The Role of the Cult in Old Israel';" George E. Mendenhall, "Response to Roland de Vaux's 'Method in the Study of Early Hebrew History'."

what Israel believed to have happened. Faith will inevitably coincide with some point in history regardless of the nature of the event. The question here is: How are we to relate the external event with the event of God's encounter with man and still give the external event the significant position the Old Testament assigns to it? Are events really the important thing here?

Hesse's close identification of the Heilsgeschichte with the actual historico-critical course of Israel's history has a certain appeal, for if we are to speak of revelation through history we must at least give consideration to this view. Naturally, we wish to know what really happened to call forth the expression of faith. But we soon realize that instead of allowing Israel to tell us what happened and what meaning this has for her, we are reconstructing a picture of external events in a way that may not have anything to do with Israel's faith. Israel's faith cannot be separated from the expressions, historical or otherwise, which give it substance. In our opinion this attitude is only suitable for constructing a so-called historico-critical picture of Israel's faith, not a picture of events that will still have theological significance, even though certain events may have brought forth this particular faith. They will not be the events of which Israel's faith speaks. We feel Hesse is correct when he suggests that we cannot speak of Heilsgeschichte where history never happened. But Hesse's reasoning is difficult to follow. While he doubts the historical trustworthiness of the Old Testament statements, he still says the Old Testament is Heilsgeschichte so far as it leads us to Christ.¹ Yet, after he has

¹EOTH, p. 294.

said this, we are unable to see how we are led to Christ through the Heilsgeschichte. This is not surprising because the historico-critical view, which he uses to understand Old Testament history, did not regulate the historical consciousness of the Old Testament writers, nor that of the New, so its ability to lead us to Christ is questionable.¹ We feel that Hesse overestimates the importance of the judgment of the historico-critical method on Israel's report when he claims that the erroneous picture of the history is not theologically important for the Christian. If Israel's report is not theologically relevant, neither is any other. Does not Hesse confuse the importance of reality with "kerygma," thereby judging the kerygma by the canons of critical methodology? Hesse seems to be looking at the Old Testament through the eyes of a positivist. But what can we say for von Rad and his traditio-historical description of Israel's history? The traditio-historical method as a tool is part of the historico-critical method and therefore, by inference, allows no recognition of God's action in history. As a result, it appears we are not actually concerned with divine activity in history at all.² Alone, this methodology can only offer us a statement about what man does in history. We also question what force of argument for a historical revelation von Rad's accusation of Hesse and Hempel has. He says their views must become contradictory because they doubt the theological competence of Israel's own statements. Yet von Rad doubts the competence of Israel to pass down

¹J. M. Robinson states that "to relate only this historical-critical history with the goal in Jesus Christ is to conceive of that history in an unhistoric way" ("The Historicity of Biblical Language," OTCF, p. 126).

²See TAT, II, 9, where von Rad states that the historico-critical picture of Israel's history is constructed on the basis of presuppositions that do not allow any possible recognition of God's activity in history, because man is considered to be the creator of history.

authentic reports of the basis of her faith.¹ On the one hand, theology loses its relationship to Israel's history, and, on the other, real history loses its relevance for theology. We can scarcely see a solution to the problem by describing Israel's history as if it had no facticity and the corresponding implication that somehow theology can exist apart from it. Hesse's and Maag's solution would seem to exclude large parts of the Old Testament picture of the Heilsgeschichte.

Baumgärtel's emphasis on the "inner events" as contrasted with the "outer events" while perhaps effective in pointing out psychological characteristics of von Rad's history is of little help in turn, for in each case the inner event is only understandable with what occurs in external history. If the Heilsgeschichte is revealed only to the believer, can one assume that the internal history, rather than the external one, is responsible for conveying the Heilsgeschichte? One cannot, as Hesse says, base a theology on historical events that never happened. With Hesse we regard Baumgärtel's inner history with some doubt, for man's response to the word of God is not in word only but in action. Baumgärtel's internal history is not a question of thinking, faith, hope, etc. It is a theological concept. God reveals his word to Israel, and man's response is his piety. But Baumgärtel considers only what is sanctifying to us in the Scriptures as Heilsgeschichte, and if we have Heilsgeschichte we cannot recognize the monarchy or the conquest as sanctifying. He is prepared to recognize the Old Testament as Heilsgeschichte if we as Christians accept it as sanctifying

¹Von Rad wants to confirm Israel's competence to make historical utterances, but not on the basis of authenticity based on historical positivism. Israel was "obsessed" with her "actual" history, but she gave only pictures of it (OTT, II, 424).

from the point of the New Testament and the Christ-event.¹ Thus the Old Testament has little significance for the church.²

B. The Contribution of
the Pannenberg School

The Pannenberg school has also recognized the difficulty with von Rad's radical separation of the two versions of Israel's history and has sought to provide a solution to both this problem and the remarks of his critics. It should be recognized that this group is composed mainly of von Rad's disciples who wish to pursue the problem farther than he has to a basic theological and methodological solution.³ Pannenberg asserts that it is in actual history that we have to look for the revelation of God. This is necessary if we are to see a difference between faith and "superstition or illusion."⁴ We are concerned with history as "reality in its totality."⁵ This seems to mean two main things: (a) One cannot legitimately make a distinction between the facts of history and their interpretations, and (b) Heilsgeschichte is included in the larger context of universal history, so there is one history, "grounded in the unity of God who works here as well as there and remains true to his promises,"⁶ this history forms the connection between the Testaments. The distinction between facts and their inter-

¹See the remarks of Hesse, KuD, 4 (1958), pp. 14f.; ZThK, 57 (1960), p. 24.

²C. Westermann, "Remarks on the Thesis of Bultmann and Baumgärtel," EOTH, p. 133.

³For a survey of this subject see Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics (London, 1968), pp. 108ff.

⁴Ibid., p. 48.

⁵EOTH, p. 319.

⁶EOTH, p. 329.

pretation is the result of positivism and neo-Kantianism and must be recognized as an artificial distinction so that fact and meaning may be seen as an indivisible entity. Here Pannenberg seeks to expand the idea of the historical method beyond the limits presently set for it.¹

Besides being occurrence, history--for Pannenberg--"is always also the history of the transmission of traditions," for here we have occurrence together with understanding. This produces a transformation which is counted as an event of history.² But this history of transmission is not to be seen phenomenologically. He predicates history as the transmission of traditions with a philosophy of history which moves beyond a phenomenological description of the growth of the traditions and includes the entire behavior of the participating individuals in the investigation. Instead of asking what stands behind the phenomena, in the philosophy of history such questions are already included.³

The inclusion of universal history in the concept of the totality of reality is a logical conclusion of this. As "every event has its original meaning within the context of occurrence and tradition in which it took place"⁴ so universal history is the larger context of history that "demonstrates the deity of God."⁵ Thus he develops the idea of revelation as

¹Theology as History, ed. by J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb (New York, 1967), p. 127. Pannenberg states that "the category of interpretation already presupposes that abstract separation between event and linguistically articulated understanding . . ." (p. 234). The idea of the "interpreting word" is opposed because "the concept of 'interpretation' usually represents only the correlative complement of a positivistic conception of the 'real'" (p. 235).

²Ibid., p. 258, n. 67.

³Ibid., pp. 256f., n. 63.

⁴Ibid., p. 127.

⁵W. Pannenberg, Revelation as History (New York, 1968), p. 133.

history ("the course of history belongs in essence to the revelation of God")¹ and hopes by this approach to demonstrate that research and knowledge assure "faith about its basis."²

For our present interest the problem with this universal outlook on history and revelation, which emphasizes the self-revelation of God at the end of history, is that it seems to detract from the question and from the significance of the past. This is evident from (a) his emphasis on the transmission of traditions and their transformation which apparently excludes any consideration for particular traditions above others that might, in fact, be more important for history than those contributing to the transformation, and (b) his emphasis on the resurrection as the event in which the meaning of history is disclosed (but not fully)³ implies that it is only in retrospect that God's activity in past history may be recognized.⁴ Faith is concerned with the future; it is based on the knowledge of God's revelation in history that demonstrates his deity. Faith need not be concerned that this knowledge has been altered by historical research. Faith is independent from the form of historical knowledge out of which it came, because "faith transcends its own picture of the event."⁵

¹Ibid.

²Theology as History, p. 269.

³Revelation as History, p. 142.

⁴N. Porteous, ASTI, 8 (1970-71), p. 69, criticizes Pannenberg on this point: "Yet even Christians are not entitled to ignore the fact that God's redemptive activity activity was recognized by men of faith in Old Testament times."

⁵Revelation as History, pp. 138f. See the criticism of Pannenberg by H. Obayashi, "Pannenberg and Troeltsch: History and Religion," JAAR, 38 (1970), pp. 401ff. Obayashi accuses Pannenberg of immunizing the significance of the present (p. 413).

Rolf Rendtorff is the Old Testament scholar in the Pannenberg school whose essays are of chief importance for our study.¹ In evaluating the position of Hesse against von Rad, he notes that if we follow von Rad the theological meaning of the Old Testament is secured with its witness to history, but history itself loses theological relevance; however, if we follow Hesse we see only a reflection of the individual narrator's faith. Theologically we must choose to surrender either history or the Old Testament.² Rendtorff, like Pannenberg, goes beyond von Rad in asserting that an Old Testament theology include historical research into the actual history of Israel. Both versions have theological relevance.

We are confronted with the task of tracing the entire course from the first event to the final form of the tradition, in order that thereby we might make clear the historical significance of the event and its history in Israel.³

Because Rendtorff wishes to unite all facets of history and theology, he equates history with tradition; thus, tradition and history-of-traditions are the dominant subjects in his discussion. But this also means that he

¹Of primary importance for our study are the articles: "Hermeneutik des Alten Testaments als Fragen nach der Geschichte," ZThK, 57 (1960), pp. 27-40; and "Geschichte und Überlieferung," Studien, pp. 81-94. Also of importance are the article, "The Concept of Revelation in Ancient Israel," in Pannenberg's Revelation as History, pp. 23ff., and the book by Rendtorff, God's History (Philadelphia, 1969). Two of the above articles are criticized by W. Zimmerli, "Offenbarung im Alten Testament. Ein Gespräch mit Rolf Rendtorff," EvTh, 22 (1962), pp. 15-31. Rendtorff answered in "Geschichte und Wort im Alten Testament," EvTh, 22 (1962), pp. 621-649. This debate is discussed by J. Robinson, Theology as History, pp. 42-62. See also Rendtorff, "Die Entstehung der israelitischen Religion als religionsgeschichtliches und theologisches Problem," ThLZ, 88 (1963), pp. 735-746; and Zwischenstation, pp. 208-222. Also of note is the critique of Rendtorff by Arnold Gamper, "Offenbarung in Geschichte," ZThK, 86 (1964), pp. 180-196.

²ZThK, 57 (1960), p. 36.

³Studien, p. 89, as quoted in Braaten, op. cit., p. 114. Cf. Studien, p. 93; ZThK, 57 (1960), pp. 38ff.; and Theology as History, pp. 55f.

must credit the historico-critical method with an additional ability, that of verifying God's redemptive activity in history.¹ He does not confine his activity to either the kerygmatic or the historico-critical version of the history. God's act is not limited to bare single historical events or to the kerygmatic depiction of the meaning of history. Historical reality possesses two dimensions: an "outer dimension" of factual events and an "inner dimension" by which the inherent meaning of the event comes to recognition in Israel.² While Rendtorff has attempted to attribute importance to the actual history of Israel in Old Testament theology we wonder if his view, which speaks of the outer events commonly the subject of historico-critical research and the inner events brought together under the concept of tradition, is as helpful in dealing with history and faith as he seems to think.³ It seems that the inner event will eventually dominate the discussion to the neglect of that aspect termed the outer event, because interest is centered in the tradition and tracing the course of that tradition. Thus, the problem of the difference between that which forms the basis of the tradition and materials brought to light in tracing the course of the tradition is not solved. There is no attempt to specify the historical rank of the

¹Studien, pp. 93f.; Braaten, op. cit., p. 116.

²Ibid. Cf. ZThK, 57 (1960), pp. 36ff. This view would seem to place attention predominantly on act rather than giving the mediating word equal attention: "The activity itself ought to bring about acknowledgement of God in the one who observes the activity and understands it in its context as an action of Jahweh" (Revelation as History, p. 47).

³Robinson states that this understanding of the history of the transmission of traditions by those of von Rad's school will hardly satisfy the traditionalists, because von Rad himself has clearly emphasized the "frequency of the mutations of the tradition" in the first volume of his theology which deals with the historical traditions (Theology as History, p. 56).

tradition that draws other traditions to itself and so the problem of history is, in the end, still left hanging.

The idea that there are dimensions of history is no doubt correct, but do inner and outer events solve the problem of the historicity of the divine acts wrought by Yahweh unless we recognize, in a very real sense, that the divine acts portrayed in the traditions have a basis in occurrence and are the events the traditions speak of, whatever their relation is to the faith that fashioned and refashioned them? Unless this is considered we are not sure that such a divine event is really a historical event at all, but only an event formed by the fusion of traditions, a traditio-historical event. We feel inclined to agree with Soggin when he points out that in this we see the shadow of Docetism under a learned robe.¹ Basically, it seems we will not have moved much closer to a solution to the problem in von Rad's work if we follow the suggestions of the Pannenberg group.

II. Critical Remarks on von Rad's Separation of the Two Versions of the History

A. Formative Factors in von Rad's Presuppositions

In our discussion of K. Barth's reluctance to bring Christianity into history we noted that he formulated a super-history which avoided the consequences posed by the historical views of E. Troeltsch and the history-of-religions school.² Barth would not bring the Heilsgeschichte into the type

¹A. Soggin, "Alttestamentliche Glaubenzzeugnisse und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit," ThZ, 17 (1961), p. 387.

²An excellent comparative study of the relationship between Barth's thought and that of Troeltsch has been made by T. W. Ogletree, Christian Faith and History (New York, 1966), pp. 192ff. The impression given us by

of history that would guarantee its demise. It was Bultmann's reaction against history providing the basis for faith that moved him into his existentialist position and produced his emphasis on the kerygma. The positions of these two theologians relative to history and faith seem to provide the basis for von Rad's position. Von Rad wants a historical faith, but like Barth he will not bring it into a kind of history that will make it relative and passing. Pannenberg points out that the kerygma theology, which developed to counter the historical method (especially E. Troeltsch's understanding of it), while successful in opposing the practice and method of historicism, tended to lose the historical basis of the biblical witness.¹ Von Rad, while developing a kerygmatic theology, has attempted to overcome the isolation of the kerygma from history as was done in Bultmann's work. Von Rad surely cannot move into the type of history that kerygma theology attempted to avoid, for this would subject Israel's witness to history to the same relativity and transitoriness as all history. Therefore, von Rad moves into another kind of history, one symbolic of experiences occurring in actual history but whose expressions cannot be subjected to historical criticism because they are symbols and do not have their centers in themselves.

Behind the problem for which these men attempted to find a solution stands the methodology of E. Troeltsch. The role of Troeltsch's methodology plays in forming von Rad's presuppositions about history is revealed by his

this work is that Barth was not able to break away from a certain amount of consent to Troeltsch's methodology, and this modicum of consent to some degree guides Barth's thought.

¹Studien, p. 134. We speak of other similarities between von Rad and Bultmann in another context; see below, pp. 284ff.

citing Troeltsch's three methodological principles: criticism, analogy, and correlation.¹ Troeltsch was actually attempting a solution to historicism, but in the end does not seem to have escaped some of its basic presuppositions. Troeltsch held that behind the critical method were certain presuppositions and a will to truth that were irreconcilable with traditional Christian faith based on a supernaturalistic metaphysics. The Bible, besides being understandable only in its historical context, was not to be exempt from the principles of interpretation and criticism applied to all other ancient literature. Any idea of supernatural intervention was a hindrance to true historical understanding. It upset the idea that the phenomena of man's historical life are so related that any disturbance in the historical nexus would cause a change in all its immediate surrounding. No event can be removed from its historical position or from the time relative to its occurrence. Faith cannot be placed in claims made about history, for every such claim has only a greater or lesser degree of probability and always stands the chance of revision. Therefore, putting faith in affirmations made about history corrupts historical judgment. In fact the only way to make such judgment of probability is by accepting the principle of analogy.²

¹EOTH, pp. 23f. Cf.: "'The historical method, once applied to biblical science . . . is a leaven which transforms everything and finally explodes the whole form of theological methods.' 'The means by which criticism is at all possible is the application of analogy. . . . But in the omniscience of analogy implies that all historical events are identical in principle'" (E. Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. II: Über historische und dogmatische Methode [Tübingen, 1889], pp. 729ff., quoted in OTT, I, 107).

²Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, II, 729-53. See also E. Troeltsch, "Historiography," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. by J. Hastings (New York, 1914), II, 716-23.

Troeltsch's principle of analogy and his attitude that divine intervention in history is incompatible with the historical method, if accepted as sole legitimate criteria for reconstructing the history of Israel as it really was, while at the same time wishing to give the biblical picture of God's activity in history its place, could obviously result in two separate pictures of the history, for the critical picture does not have a place for God's activity. This would cause von Rad to look for a solution to the problem of history and faith in the idea of history itself, instead of in methodology. C. Barth criticizes von Rad's stand on the principle of analogy. This principle may have been binding on historical criticism for a long time, but it need not apply forever; and again we should guard against a methodology that declares every "suprahuman and supranatural causality" unhistorical.¹

Another factor we feel active in forming von Rad's presuppositions of history lies in what he means by the historico-critical version of Israel's history. When von Rad speaks of the historico-critical version of Israel's history, he refers to that version supplied by the Alt and Noth school, with its emphasis on the aetiological character of much of the early material and its general skepticism towards Israel's history. These attitudes are clearly formative factors in von Rad's presuppositions. But we immediately realize that we have a choice of critical versions of Israel's history so that the so-called scientific version is not as scientific as it might seem to be.²

¹EvTh, 23 (1963), p. 368.

²This is evident in von Rad's own work by his repeated use of such phrases as "no doubt" (OTT, I, 20), "assume" (OTT, I, 21; II, 422), "presume" (OTT, I, 21), "must have been" (OTT, I, 37ff.). Many other instances may be noted throughout his critical historical presentation.

We have two critical positions on the reconstruction of Israel's history to consider: that of Albrecht Alt, Martin Noth, and their associates;¹ and that of W. F. Albright, J. Bright, G. E. Wright, and certain French Roman Catholic scholars who construct a picture which follows the biblical picture more closely.² But by and large when German theologians speak of the historico-critical reconstruction of the history as it actually was, they

¹Relevant works in this group include: A. Alt, Die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina (1925); "Israel," RGG, III, 2nd ed. (1929), cols. 437ff. and III, 3rd ed. (1959), cols. 936ff.; Joshua (1938); Erwägungen über die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina (1939) [all the above except the RGG article are in Kleine Schriften (München, 1953), and Die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina is now in English translation in Essays on Old Testament History and Religion (Oxford, 1966)]; M. Noth, Das Buch Joshua (Tübingen, 1938, 1953); Überlieferungsgeschichte Studien, I (Halle, 1943, 1958); Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch (Stuttgart, 1948); Eng. trans. by B. W. Anderson: A History of Pentateuchal Traditions (Englewood Cliffs, 1972); Die Welt des Alten Testaments (1940, 3rd ed. 1956); Geschichte und Gotteswort im Alten Testament (1949), now in Gesammelte Studien (München, 1957), Eng. trans. by D. R. AP-Thomas: The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays (London, 1967); Geschichte Israels, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1954), Eng. trans. by S. Godman: The History of Israel (New York, 1960); "Remarks on the Sixth Volume of the Mari Texts," Journal of Semitic Studies, 1 (1956), pp. 322-334; "Hat die Bibel doch Recht?," Festschrift für Günther Dehn, ed. by W. Schneemelcher (Neukirchen, 1957), pp. 7ff.; "Der Beitrag der Archäologie zur Geschichte Israel," SVT, 7 (1960), pp. 262-282; Die Ursprung des Alten Israels im Lichte neuer Quellen (Köln, 1961).

²Important works of this group are: W. F. Albright, "The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology," BASOR, 74 (1939), pp. 11-22; G. E. Wright and F. L. Filson, The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible (Philadelphia, 1945, 2nd ed. 1956); J. Bright, Joshua, IB, II (New York, 1953); W. F. Albright, From Stone Age to Christianity, 2nd ed. (Baltimore, 1957); J. Bright, Early Israel in Recent History Writing (Chicago, 1956); G. E. Wright, Biblical Archaeology (Philadelphia, 1957), and "Archaeology and Biblical Studies," JBL, 77 (1958), pp. 39-55; J. Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia, 1959); G. E. Wright, "Modern Issues in Biblical Studies: History and the Patriarchs," ET, 71 (1959-60), pp. 292ff. (cf. von Rad's answer, ET, 72 1960-61, pp. 213ff.), and "Old Testament Scholarship in Prospect," JBR, 28 (1960), pp. 182-193. Not to be overlooked are: N. Glueck, "The Other Side of Jordan," BASOR (1940); and Rivers in the Desert (New York, 1959). For observations on these two scientific reconstructions of the history of Israel see: M. Weippert, Die Landnahme der israelitischen

are speaking of the work of a succession of form critics,¹ especially A. Alt and M. Noth. But this approach, or school, has no exclusive claim on the critical picture. It should be remembered that this German picture developed out of a background that has traditionally held rather negative views of Israel's account of her history.² With new methods of historical research, different presuppositions, and a superior knowledge of the ancient Near East due mainly to the discipline of archaeology, the negative tendencies and attitudes of Wellhausen and his offspring have been gradually modified and transformed until it is no longer necessary--or indeed possible--for some to

Stämme in der neueren wissenschaftlichen Diskussion, FRLANT, 92 (Göttingen, 1967), pp. 14-140, Eng. trans. by J. D. Martin: The Land Settlement of the Israelite Tribes (Naperville, 1971); H. Weidmann, Die Patriarchen und ihre Religion, FRLANT, 94 (Göttingen, 1968), pp. 126-167. See also: R. de Vaux, Die Patriarchenerzählungen und die Geschichte, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1968); "Method in the Study of Early Hebrew History," The Bible in Modern Scholarship, pp. 15-29; and in the same book, the response by G. E. Mendenhall, pp. 30-36.

¹"Was man normalerweise so bezeichnet, ist das Ergebnis der hauptsächlich in der deutschsprachigen Theologie und Geschichte durchgeführten historisch-kritischen Forschungen am Alten Testament, die in der ersten Hälfte unseres Jahrhunderts von C. Steuernagel, Edward Meyer, B. Luther und A. Klostermann begonnen, von H. Möhlenbrink fortgesetzt und endlich von A. Alt, M. Noth, K. Elliger und G. von Rad zu ihrem Höhepunkt geführt wurden" (E. Soggin, "Geschichte, Historie, und Heilsgeschichte im Alten Testament," ThLZ, 89 [1964], p. 733).

²The Wellhausen school gave the fixing of the Old Testament text a late date, as well as the traditions, and tended to depreciate the Massoretic text compared to other texts. Alt's, Noth's, and von Rad's "negative" attitude is in some respects in line with this attitude, although the age of traditions in von Rad's work may be extreme regardless of the document in which they are found. This attitude is bound to affect even a "scientific" approach. For an appraisal of the problems brought about by Albright's challenge of Alt's and Noth's conclusions see: J. A. Soggin, "Ancient Biblical Traditions and Modern Archaeological Discoveries," BA, 23 (1960), pp. 95ff.; and ThLZ, 89 (1964), p. 724.

take such a negative view of Israel's early history.¹ While the views of both critical schools agree that a unified picture of Israel's history is not possible, we cannot be so dogmatic as to say that some approximation is not possible. It is impossible by contemporary historico-critical investigation to achieve an organic, closed picture of Israel's pre-history and early history that can diminish the importance of the traditional picture. Also, there are a number of problems still unsolved in the later period of Israel's history so that a closed picture of Israel's history is really not available.² While historical research always moves in the realm of probabilities and unknowns, and this caused a problem for faith of such proportions that theologians were obliged to turn to the spiritual world of general religious truths or take refuge in a Heilsgeschichte, new methods of historical investigation should help improve the attitude of the theologian towards Israel's account of her history.

What may we say then relative to von Rad's presuppositions in light of the evidence of archaeology and historical investigation pursued under

¹J. Bright has attempted to show the problems involved in the strict traditio-historical approach to history writing practiced by Noth in his book: Early Israel in Recent History Writing (Chicago, 1956). He has also produced a history of Israel which puts a more positive light on the biblical picture. The results of this confrontation between Bright and Noth should not be exaggerated, but one significant point may be made: "The one who looks at the positions adopted by Noth leading up to 1959 will see a development from a certain skepticism to a rather positive attitude towards traditional tales and persons. On the other hand, looking at Bright between 1956 and 1959 one will note something quite similar: apart from man (sometimes legitimate) criticisms of Noth's positions, one sees in him the development of a strong critical spirit as to the reliability of the traditions concerned, which his positive attitude does not trouble to conceal" (Soggin, BA, 23 [1960], p. 100).

²Soggin, ThZ, 17 (1961), p. 394. See also ThLZ, 89 (1964), p. 733.

different presuppositions? Are we to conclude that because Israel, like all peoples who wrote history, used traditions to construct a picture of her past, that this picture is entirely drawn up by faith and that the critical picture has no bearing on it? The answer, we affirm, is No.¹

H. T. Frank is correct when he states that even though the Bible is but partially subject to historical disciplines, archaeology has brought the history behind the sacred testimony to light and thus it has become real history. Furthermore, few reasons exist to doubt the essential accuracy of the history in the Old Testament narratives. The Old Testament gives

¹J. A. Soggin, ThLZ, 89 (1964), p. 732, has made a significant comment in relation to this point: In reality the problem of Heilsgeschichte-Geschichte has only under certain circumstances anything to do with theology. Although Heilsgeschichte is a theological magnitude we encounter the above problem mutatis mutandis under the terminology tradition-history amongst all peoples, and it may be arranged without difficulty into the categories of primeval and pre-history. Also in Israel we have only saga where under certain external presuppositions the will to write history is lacking. At a more developed stage the chronicle joins up with the saga, and relative to this, history also appears early. All this is but a question of the intellectual development of a people and is only in part a theological problem. Naturally Israel also uses its sagas and legends in unreflected ways, as is the case with all prehistoric peoples. What one regards today as fervor, inclination, etc., is a typical element in such genres. Israel is extremely critical towards its sagas and legends, as the patriarchal stories sufficiently illustrate. The disjunction between the biblical traditions and the picture of the history presented by the historico-critical sciences shows rather easily and for the most part defines the distinctiveness of Israel's culture from all other peoples. First with the monarchy the material presuppositions and the will to write history were procured, and this permitted the creation of greater and lesser historical works such as the portrayal of the kingship of Abimelech (Jg. 9) or the tradition of the succession to David's throne (II Sam. 9-20; I Kg. 1-2) which are also strongly theological but for that reason not tendentiously fabricated (cf. Jg. 9:23, 56; II Sam. 11:27; 17:14, etc.). In this tradition we find the history of Ahab's wars with the Arameans (I Kg. 20, 22). The theological character of these works has never been felt to be an element against its objectivity until now." (Translation ours.)

religious interpretations to events, but archaeology has made less credible the accusation of historical unreliability by generally confirming the narratives.¹

We are not inferring that archaeological method and traditio-historical study are rival schools of interpretation. Traditio-historical studies are not to be considered less significant for the study of Israel's history than is archaeology, for careful literary analysis of the traditions is necessary. Neither method is any more objective than the other, and the proponents of each method exercise subjective judgments in working with their materials.² But these methods should be employed in complementary roles. Each may provide checks on the other as they work toward a mutual goal.³ But, however we evaluate these different methods, we must maintain that a reconstruction of Israel's history which radically diverges from the biblical picture because one is conditioned to accept the conclusions of a particular skeptical school or of a method employed in a certain extreme way, but which perhaps cannot be used in a particular period for which there is no means of cross-checking to determine the report's accuracy, is not grounds for tearing down the stated historical foundation of the biblical witness and leaving the impression that all the text is concerned with is "meaning." All historico-critical tools may be applied to Israel's history

¹H. T. Frank, Bible, Archaeology and Faith (Nashville, 1971), pp. 339ff.

²R. Clements, Abraham and David (Naperville, 1967), pp. 11ff.

³With A. M. Cohen, "The Role of the Shilonite Priesthood in the United Monarchy of Ancient Israel," HUCA, 36 (1965), p. 59, we would welcome more work on reconstructing the saga of Israel's early history by those trained in the social sciences.

without bringing such negative presuppositions to it, and where such critical treatment is not possible the picture given by Israel is preferable to another which treatens to separate fact from meaning.

An additional element we would add to the formation of von Rad's presuppositions is indicated in his statement that a great part of Israel's historical traditions are to be regarded as poetry and that this is the way faith perceives things. By poetry, Israel allowed itself to be "sure of historical facts," their "location" and "significance;" made the past "absolutely present;"¹ and allowed the narrators to surpass the limits of "exact historiography."² In connection with this we should understand von Rad's statement that Israel was involved with her history to the point of fervor.³ Von Rad cites W. Dilthey on two points regarding the nature of poetry: it is an organ for the understanding of life; and by it a concept is produced that "transcends reality."⁴ Von Rad informs us that in this production the primary force was Yahwism.

By considering Dilthey's concepts we may possibly perceive how much his ideas influenced von Rad's thinking on the significance of Israel's poetic expressions. Dilthey attempted to see a unity between fact and meaning, while still remaining loyal to the historical school of nineteenth-century Germany which was concerned with the facts. Dilthey held that the

¹OTT, I, 109.

²OTT, I, 111.

³OTT, I, 107.

⁴"Poetry is not the imitation of a reality which already exists in the same quality prior to it . . . ; the aesthetic faculty is a creative power for the production of a concept which transcends reality and is not present in any abstract thinking, or indeed in any way of contemplating the world'" (Dilthey, Gesammelte Schriften [Leipzig, 1914-1918], VI, 116, quoted in OTT, I, 111).

goal of the meaning of life must be accomplished by grasping present reality. He could not accept the view that understanding could be accomplished by metaphysics. His difficulty with transforming human existence into epistemological categories is evidenced by his attempt to analyze the "lived experience" (Erlebnis). Dilthey's other epistemological category, "understanding" (Verstehen), found its highest expression in poetry which transforms experience into another existence so that one may understand what he could never experience himself.¹ This preoccupation with poetry is further illuminated by the observation that Dilthey greatly admired those who attempted to grasp the meaning of life intuitively "in an artistic rather than in rational ways."² It appears that Dilthey's position on poetry as the highest form of understanding stems from his concern that the goal of the meaning of life must be accomplished by grasping present reality. But what if value-creating reality does not exist in our present history? Then all attempts to see life as a union of fact and value would be defeated by historical reality. It has been suggested that all of Dilthey's unfulfilled attempts at a description of human life, which should provide a basis for sciences in which fact and value were united, were frustrated just because the task proved impossible without consideration of values transcendent of history.³ Poetry, then, by which reality is transcended, seems to be employed to achieve what is not possible in our present history. Perhaps the

¹Ibid., pp. 94, 99.

²E. C. Gritsch, "Wilhelm Dilthey and the Interpretation of History," LQ, 15 (1963), p. 60.

³R. W. Jenson, "Wilhelm Dilthey and a Background Problem of Theology," LQ, 15 (1963), p. 219.

most significant point we can make regarding the influence of Dilthey's thought on von Rad is to quote a question asked by Ulrich Simon regarding von Rad's understanding of history, although no reference is made to Dilthey's philosophy: "Does von Rad here betray something implicit in our history and reflect in particular the 'disappointment' of our ideals in the face of twentieth-century defeat?"¹

One may ask, we feel, that if on the one hand the avoidance of metaphysics and on the other the honoring of the presuppositions of the old German school of history do not bring von Rad to accept in a general way Dilthey's views, and this results in his understanding that poetry is the means by which faith perceives things, i.e., the significance of the historical acts. We may also ask how much of von Rad's understanding of how events were glorified by later story tellers in their zeal for Yahweh has its roots in this same presupposition of poetic perception.

It appears to us that there is also some affinity between von Rad's ideas and those of R. Otto. Besides the respect both seem to have for feeling or emotion in understanding, we may note one or two more definite similarities. Von Rad's exposition of the importance of the charisma as a constitutive factor in Yahwism finds a parallel in Otto's understanding that the charisma is to be seen as a "psychic factum" to be included among the causes and explanatory factors of history if the historian is to avoid an erroneous reconstruction. However, after the history of religion has done its work its role vanishes and the charisma is the factor that becomes

¹ChQR, 167 (1966), p. 244.

important for the theologian.¹ In addition we find Otto speaking of new interpretations in different times causing the submerging of original elements, new materials causing the blurring of old traditions resulting in later times giving them different meanings than they originally had.² This seems comparable to von Rad's understanding of the importance of secondary experiences over primary ones in Israel's presentation of her history due to constant reinterpretation.

B. Consequences of von Rad's
Separation of the Two
Versions of the History

By separating the two versions of the history, von Rad appears to have built the kerygmatic version in the air.³ A more serious charge is that it tends towards a gnostic view.⁴ Von Rad is not justified in main-

¹The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man (London, 1938), p. 375.

²Ibid., pp. 151f.

³Von Rad has stated, as reported to us by Prof. George Coats to whom the statement was made, that if he were to write his theology over again he would do it so that it did not appear to hang in the air. Coats would not try to interpret what von Rad meant. Does it mean that von Rad would attempt to specify what events lay behind Israel's reports? We hardly think so, for at the same time he apparently said to Coats that he would only present Israel's version of the history. We confronted von Rad with the question because in Problems of the Hexateuch, p. 71, he quite clearly refers the Yahwist's narratives to conditions, obtaining to the monarchy, set in train by David. His only answer was that he wrote that a long time ago, a standard answer according to former students of his. Professor Porteous states that because von Rad formerly opted for the Heilsgeschichte, but later conceded that the Heilsgeschichte did not misrepresent what happened in actual history, "It looks as though, corresponding to the so-called new quest of the historical Jesus, von Rad ought to concede the advisability of having a new quest of the historical Israel." (Probleme, p. 421).

⁴It is von Rad's radical insistence on keeping the two pictures of the history separate and his refusal to subject the picture of the history built up by faith to historical criticism that have prompted some to infer that von Rad is the Old Testament counterpart of R. Bultmann whose views

have been considered a modern form of gnosticism. (See E. Voegelin, "History and Gnosis," OTCF, pp. 64ff., for the gnostic charge against Bultmann.) Several theologians have noted the similarity between von Rad and Bultmann, some forcefully, some denying the similarity. W. Eichrodt, in discussing von Rad's approach to Old Testament theology, states: "Even if one recognizes that there is visible in it an earnest effort to link up faith to some orientation and proof in history, it is hardly possible to avoid characterizing it as a religious philosophy. All this is strongly reminiscent of the trend in NT studies inspired by Bultmann, in which the connection of the kerygma with historical reality has become equally problematical" (TOT, I, 514). F. Hesse, ZThK, 57 (1960), pp. 25f., is more severe in his attack on von Rad: "So verlangt von Rad auf dem Boden des Alten Testaments noch etwas ganz anderes, viel Schwereres von uns als BULTMANN auf dem des Neuen Testaments. Nach BULTMANN haben wir dem neutestamentlichen Zeugnis als unsere Existenz betreffendem auch dann zu glauben, wenn das Bezeugte u. U. gar nicht den Charakter eines historischen Ereignisses hat. Die historisch konstatierende Fragestellung wird darum dort, wo es z. B. um die Auferstehung Jesu Christi als ein 'eschatologisches' Ereignis geht, sinnlos. Im Alten Testament aber haben wir es allüberall mit Geschehnissen zu tun, die sich 'innergeschichtlich' abgespielt haben, so dass man hier an keinem Punkte die historische Fragestellung als sinnlos oder auch nur als unsachgemäß bezeichnen könnte. Das Zeugnis über die Geschichte Gottes mit Israel und die an das Alte Testament gerichtete historische Fragestellung lassen sich prinzipiell gar nicht trennen. Es ist also ein Sacrificium intellectus, was von Rad von uns verlangt--ein solches zu fordern würde BULTMANN nie in den Sinn kommen. . . ." B. W. Anderson, "The New Heilsgeschichte," Int, 19 (1965), pp. 337ff., argues that Eichrodt's criticism is unfair. While one may question von Rad's emphasis on the fragmentary character of the historical evidence for the early history and his conclusions regarding the history of Israel beginning during the time of Joshua, von Rad wants to emphasize that the faith of Israel is rooted in real historical events even though they are not accessible to historical criticism. His theological approach does not necessarily depend on the assessment of the evidence, yet it may be that a new quest will show us that the early history is not the creation of the tribal confederacy. Von Rad's strong emphasis on the historical character of Israel's faith is the reason some have wrongly jumped to the conclusion that he has done the same kind of thing Bultmann has.

If we analyze von Rad's work in light of the critique of Bultmann made by Eric Voegelin, OTCF, pp. 64ff., we do find several points worthy of consideration. Identifying the gnostic strain in Bultmann, he writes: "The oscillation of things between the status of historical phenomena and moments (in the Hegelian sense) in a gnostic speculation is possible only if the fundamental concepts of history, philosophy, and theology are sufficiently indeterminate to allow for such movement. Indeterminacy of terms as a gnostic symptom is correlative to the device of identifications. By indeterminacy is not meant equivocation of terms. It can be characterized rather as a disturbance of contact with the reality to which the terms refer. The terms are neither developed through adequate analysis from reality nor do they, when used, refer to the reality to which the reader would assume them to refer" (pp. 69f.). It seems to us that von Rad's concept of history is sufficiently indeterminate to merit identification with gnostic characteristics. His concept of history does not have adequate characteristics

demanded by almost any definition we could give history, nor does he attempt to relate his idea of history to what we generally mean by history. It is questionable on the basis of what von Rad has written, or said to us (excluding what his colleagues say in defense of him relative to his intention to imply more than the reader finds), that his concept of history arises from an inadequate analysis of reality. His history concerns Israel's experiences, whatever they might have been. This may be part of any historical account, but not at the expense of the designated content. The reality which the reader assumes to be the content of the report, according to von Rad is not the reality the account refers to. If this is true of his idea of history, we may expect the same of his idea of prophecy. For von Rad, Israel's history is prophecy, an idea of Bultmann's also. But because the definition of history is indeterminate, what may we say of prophecy? The Old Testament meaning of prophecy is assumed to be inadequate and is given another meaning that has little, if any, relation to what the prophets understood by that term or the understanding we gain from reading the Old Testament.

Other aspects of von Rad's theology reflect the atmosphere of Bultmann which, of course, pervaded much theology. Bultmann's position implies that all other concepts of history are coextensive with his own idea of "eschatological existence." This is, according to him, the true idea of history. The preaching of the eschatological event is constitutive of the event, and at that moment demands a decision. This would seem to have parallels in von Rad's thought. The Deuteronomistic theology of history covers the meaning of earlier histories in the Old Testament. This theology of history breathes deeply of the historicity of the individual, or the recognition of the historian's own view of history being a historical event that we read about in Bultmann (R. Bultmann, History and Eschatology [Edinburgh, 1957], pp. 43, 151f.; cf. W. Pannenberg, EOTH, p. 325). The place of the historian should be emphasized in historiography, but the idea of existence should not cover up the event character of history or make it indeterminate. It seems that von Rad has come close to this: "Offenbar schöpft der Erzähler aus Erfahrungen, die der Jahweglaube in vielen Generationen eingebracht hat. Diese Erfahrungen und Führungen, von einem Geschichtshandeln, in dem sich Jahwe verbirgt und offenbart, sind in jenen alten Erzählungen auf eine sehr geistige Weise neu ausgesprochen. Sicher erfassen wir den Zeugnisgehalt dieser Erzählungen viel sachgemässer, wenn wir uns klar machen, dass in ihnen eine Erfahrung verrechnet ist, die von dem damaligen Faktum bis in die Gegenwart des Erzählers reicht" (Theologie und Liturgie [München, 1952], pp. 18f.). Also von Rad, OTT, I, 118f., states that every generation of people had to become Israel, that Israel was never at rest but always travelling the road between promise and fulfillment. This people acting as a unity produced the unity of her history. Bultmann's idea of historicity as the nature of man who never possesses a true life at any one moment, but always moving on, yet not at the mercy of the sweep of history that is independent of himself, has a certain affinity with the above idea of von Rad's (Bultmann, loc. cit.). Bultmann speaks, too, of the "now of responsibility" of "decision" and emphasizes that the unity of history "does not consist in a causal connection of events, nor in a progress developing by logical necessity; for the historical process falls to the responsibility of men, to the decision of the individual persons" (op. cit., pp. 143f.). Does not this have an echo in von Rad's understanding of the Deuteronomist in whose work all the prophecies became history? This is accomplished by incorporating prophecies into

taining a separation between the two pictures of Israel's history. The Old Testament picture of the history is not one entirely drawn up by faith, a Heilsgeschichte, or a history worked by God's word.¹ Nor is it purely a confessional picture in which Israel was involved to the point of fervor. There also appears to be no adequate reason to hold that because a great part of the historical traditions is to be regarded as poetry that this is a feature attributable to the way faith perceives things. We are not convinced that Israel's picture tends only to a theological maximum at the expense of a critical minimum. We are deeply indebted to von Rad, in the interest of

the historical work of the Deuteronomist to show how the word did not fail. It also demonstrates how "history becomes word and word becomes history" (OTT, II, 358). Not everything we have pointed out here is necessarily related to the question of a gnostic element in von Rad's work or to the question of what we feel is unacceptable in his work. Certainly the decisions and positions of men are to be seen as historical events, but the over-all impression we get from von Rad is that he is close to Bultmann in his philosophy of history, and this brings up the gnostic question in modern form. It appears inevitable, in view of the fact that von Rad's theology understands the elements in the basic interpretive sectors of history in an aetiological sense, that we should perceive the meaning of the Old Testament to be a concern for the explanation of human existence (Israel's) at a specific moment.

¹Von Rad is convinced that both the kerygmatic version and the historico-critical version have conceptions or presuppositions at their bases that are very similar, and so eventually both concepts will merge into a unified view of history (cf. his remarks: OTT, II, 416; TAT, II, 8ff.; EvTh, 24 [1964], pp. 124ff.). By this he is certainly referring to the principle of analogy which in the kerygmatic version of the history takes the form of typology. In discussing von Rad's views with me, C. Westermann stated that he felt von Rad would have liked to have said more about this problem of history but did not. Speaking of a totality of history in which we have the acts of God is also an attempt to get secular historians to understand history as something besides political movements. Historismus is almost exclusively concerned with this. But in the Bible many aspects of history are interrelated. Political history cannot be spoken of in isolation. There is a history of the family, and also a history with God. While in secular history there is no connection between these, in the Bible there is; and this offers the possibility of communication between secular and biblical historians. Westermann says that the term "kerygmatic version" is vague and should be avoided.

theology and faith, for attacking the traditional idea that all importance lies in the critically assured minimum and that this is all one may conscientiously believe in. But then to abandon the theological relevance of the critical minimum, while maintaining that the confessional account does not misrepresent what happened in actual history, causes one to question how much of von Rad's kerygma theology can actually be a solution to the pre-suppositions of positivism.¹ It appears to be a capitulation to it. It almost seems to be a denial of the activity of the living God in the concrete events of history. Confessional history the Old Testament may be, but rejecting the positivistic perspective for theological meaning does not necessitate rejecting the search for the critical minimum. Reacting against the objectification of the Heilsgeschichte is no reason to reject critical history or the importance of something having happened. This generalization of von Rad's in the interest of the kerygma is not necessary. In the Old Testament we have historical works formed intentionally as confessions to the work of God. This does not mean that we will hold to a one-to-one identification of the actual historical events with the tradition, but neither does it mean that we will supercede the facts of history with the tradition. Faith is not built on the theological working of historical tradition without believing in its factual nature. If the event can be explained away, biblical religion will perish. Yet here is where we feel von Rad's traditio-historical approach threatens. What God did as witnessed in the Old Testament was done before all to see, and the historical data is indis-

¹M. Honecker rightly states that von Rad has attempted to save a reality for his kerygmatic version of the history which does not exist (EvTh, 23 [1963], p. 151).

pensable for an over-all appropriation of a tenable theological position. Israel may have handed down her traditions in such a way that non-historical elements became interwoven with the historical traditions, and for theological purposes various traditions were fused, a fact that cautions us against exclusive emphasis on history as a medium of revelation; but we do not accept that the kerygma in terms of its meaning is of such total importance that the critical question is no longer of theological value. Despite the problems of Israel's picture of her history, it still displays an impressive historical mentality, one which is so extraordinary in its environment that the critical problem cannot be ignored. It seems illogical, and almost more than we can accept, to show an interest in Israel's historiography without a corresponding interest in her history.

If we adopt the same understanding of history von Rad does, if we follow his traditio-historical method to the point that Israel's history appears to be a traditio-historical picture, we lose the sense of the importance of the actual history for theology and find ourselves putting our interest, if not our faith, in Israel's cultic and theological activity alone. It appears that when secondary experiences are the primary objects of theological consideration myth or fable can function equally well for theology.¹ These circumstances seem to be the logical consequence of von

¹It appears to us that failure to closely identify the function of myth in contrast to history has resulted in weakening the importance of history for theology. B. W. Anderson, "Myth and the Biblical Tradition," ThT, 27 (1970-71), pp. 54ff., understands history as expressing mythical meanings and advocates reconsideration of the sharp distinction drawn between mythical and historical. He states that Israel's Heilsgeschichte functions as myth. W. Taylor Stevenson shares a similar view in affirming that the myth of history has the formal characteristics of all myths (History as Myth [New York, 1969], pp. 6ff.). Stevenson avoids the question of whether myth relates to something that actually happened. But the

Rad's generalizing presuppositions. If one presupposes that he cannot distinguish the historical element in a tradition or a fusion of traditions from the interpretation,¹ often given in the fusion of traditions, how is one to know if it is a historical tradition or if there is anything historical in it at all? Or does it matter? In what sense may we call the content of Israel's historiography history?² Even though von Rad is convinced that what he calls the Old Testament view of history will keep faith in Christ from falling into mythology and speculation,³ and that the "unification of concepts" inherent in myth and ideology is avoided in Israel's conception of history,⁴ his depreciation of the actual history makes the biblical picture appear to function without sufficient reference to original historical situations; thus the unknown present circumstances which create the religious content of the biblical statements is the important thing. This excessive concern with the existential moment might also be termed a characteristic of myth. The above situation seems to be brought about by

question cannot be avoided. E. C. Blackmann points out that indifference to historical inquiry including the details of Christ's life and environment puts him out of focus, "gives him only an existential appeal, and may result in substituting for faith rooted in history a myth which has no roots at all" ("Is History Irrelevant for the Christian Kerygma?," Int, 21 [1967], p. 444). One wonders, concerning the appeal to mythical understanding, if instead of history being the definitive basis for theological understanding and faith, understanding and faith are being based on the myth of the eternal return.

¹Von Rad asserts in his debate with Hesse that it is not easy to separate the original event from the overlying interpretation (TAT, II, 8f.).

²This deepens the crisis over what history is, not that the crisis did not exist before, but with von Rad this seems to have reached a new high in Old Testament theology. C. Westermann has gone so far as to tell us privately that it is now no longer possible to speak of Geschichte in the German language. The implication being, we take it, after von Rad.

³OTT, II, 386.

⁴OTT, II, 427.

von Rad's understanding of Israel's historical concern where the secondary is primary, and where the historical tales and aetiological narratives are nearly identifiable. But is it not true that the amount of status given the secondary interpretation is also an interpretation and does not necessarily reflect Israel's position?

We are convinced by what the biblical witness stands to have us believe: that Israel's faith was grounded in actual historical events that took place in time and space, and that descriptions of these events are set forth in the biblical witness. If this is so, then we have the obligation to preserve the historicity of these events, events that happened once and that evoked a response in the believer at the time of their occurrence. Even though the events of the Heilsgeschichte were subject to reactualization, unlike the event of Jehu's revolution mentioned in its particularity,¹ this does not necessarily mean that the reactualization is more important than the original happening. Von Rad seems to be exercising a great deal of faith in assuming that with all the reactualization and reinterpretation from generation to generation Israel did not lose contact with real history.² Is it possible to guarantee a contact with real history by means of a religious experience? Is one able to depend on the constant character of the religious experience for such a guarantee? It seems that all von Rad is saying is that Israel had religious experiences in her history, and that we may be sure that she had similar experiences before in her history.

Von Rad is merely assuming that the acts of God which are the subject of Israel's testimonies have an anchorage in history, and it should be

¹OTT, II, 420.

²OTT, II, 424.

pointed out that when he defends the propriety of Israel's testimonies over what the historico-critical method says, he chooses as a point for discussion a historical event fully within reach of the historico-critical method, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.¹ In this way he partially avoids the issue he raised by assuming that because the phenomenon of the faith is not explainable by historico-critical research, neither is the picture of the history it drew the object of critical investigation. He points out that the destruction of Jerusalem is said to be a judgment of God in contrast to what the critical version says of the event. But this does not touch the real issue. In the case of the destruction of Jerusalem we have an event that undeniably happened as stated by the critical method. There is no possibility of the question arising if it makes a difference whether the city was actually destroyed. The idea of the judgment of God is the religious meaning of the destruction. This depiction is not told to symbolize some unknown catastrophic religious experience Israel had, nor is it told to describe the destruction of her faith. This situation is quite different from the early history based on documents whose nature makes historical analysis difficult or impossible, where we are faced with events and a course of history preserved for the most part in Israel's cult or institutions.

In von Rad's debate with G. E. Wright,² at the point where the Abraham traditions are the principal subject, Wright insists that there is a historical element in the sacrifice story that is theologically important--the protest against human sacrifice. This example from the Abraham tradi-

¹TAT, II, 9ff.

²See above, p. 203, n. 1.

tions is not a happy one, and to some extent von Rad is correct when he charges Wright with entering a sphere that has nothing to say theologically. But the sacrifice story is far from being the central historical tradition in the account of the ancestor's faith. Central to the story is the patriarch who left his homeland at the command of God, and in doing so manifested faith.¹ It is important to remember that even though collected works and traditions have been created by historians and editors, thus reflecting their faith, and that their theology partially determined the selection of materials we find in their presentations, the origin of the material is also a factor that determines selection. We feel this principle of origin is a most important factor for historical evaluation of theology.² It is credible to maintain that a certain kind of tradition was selected by the Old Testament writers and no other. The same presupposition applies to what took place in the New Testament.

When we stress the importance of the original element or the actual history we do not intend that all the details of the kerygma should be taken as being of equal historical standing, and that their theological importance must be determined by the scrutiny of modern historical investigation. But the maintenance of the evidence is invaluable for the overall consideration of the historical description and for the basis of the Heilsgeschichte itself. We must have Geschichte if we are to have Heilsgeschichte, lest we end up with Heils but very little Geschichte.

¹It should be remembered that von Rad believes that the Yahwist composed Gen. 12:1ff. ad hoc in order to move from the primeval history to the actual Abraham stories (Genesis, 158).

²See W. Beyerlin, Origin and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions, pp. 164f. Cf. Soggin, ThZ, 17 (1961), pp. 389ff.

Meanings conveyed in the form of events that are not descriptive of the history that formed them are of dubious value in a theology of the acts of God, because concern is centered on a historical way of thinking without an adequate concern for history.¹ The significance of Israel's history for theology would be very limited if it rested solely on a way of thinking or on a "heilsgeschichtlichen Trend," the concern to include ever wider areas of the history, without assuming that the historian was concerned with the actual basic events that make up the history and gave it its impulse.² Because von Rad is guilty of attempting to make the Heilsgeschichte the exclusive category for the interpretation of the Old Testament and has developed it without regard for other categories that constitute history, we would do better to refer to it as the story of salvation.³ We must speak of the totality of factors at work in Israel's history. We cannot ignore the original historical situation and be concerned entirely with secondary interpretations or meanings. This raises the question of the "neo-Kantian distinction between reality and value,"⁴ and the problems presented by the existentialist interpretation of history. If to some extent meanings do not depend on the events to which they are linked, then it would seem possible

¹J. M. Robinson states that in von Rad's work "Heilsgeschichte tends to become Heilsgeschichtlichkeit, the historicness of Israel's stance toward the divine" (OTCF, p. 127).

²EvTh, 24 (1964), p. 391.

³J. McIntyre speaks to this point when he criticizes the attempts of the proponents of Heilsgeschichte "to convert a recital of the mighty acts of God, which was originally intended for didactic, liturgical, ethical and religious purposes, into something quite foreign to it, namely, an interpretation of history" (op. cit., p. 109).

⁴Braaten, op. cit., p. 49.

for meanings to stand on their own. While this is not von Rad's position, it is the logical consequence of it. Thus, there can be a separation of disciplines and the facts of history turned over to those dealing with critical studies, while faith is concerned only with the kerygmatic intention of the text.

If the importance of events, or the original occurrence of those events regarded as central to the faith, is not maintained as the primary force in determining later actualization and interpretation, then we are left with the alternative conclusion that faith is grounded in the nature of being itself, that all we have in the Old Testament is faith expressed from old sources.

Obviously this raises problems when we come to consider the Christ-event in the New Testament. The reality of Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, as a saving event, subjecting itself in time and space, in human history corresponds to the belief that God revealed himself in Israel's history in concrete events, occurring in time and space that are the object of historico-critical investigation.¹ It was not in some totally inaccessible or problem-free Heilsgeschichte, with which God identified himself, but the kind of history we all know and contribute to.² Recognizing the Old Testament to be a record of a Heilsgeschichte and confessing that the Word became flesh entering the stream of history make it imperative that we recognize that there was a past. We are not disputing that the building

¹C. H. Dodd, History and the Gospel (London, 1963), pp. 11f.

²McIntyre, op. cit., p. 79.

of traditions, the historicizing and adapting of myth, and the impulses of Israel's religion received from adopting foreign material from Egyptian, Phoenician and Iranian religions, have a great deal to do with the development of the consciousness of Jesus Christ; but this does not negate the historical element for theology, either in the past or in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, a theological figure, is inseparable from the Incarnate Word; and the historical figure of Jesus is not merely the result of an understanding based on building traditions in Old Testament times, especially if we understand the traditions to have only an indirect relationship to their obvious historical subject matter. If Jesus was a historical figure and follows in the train of saving events in the Old Testament, then the facticity of these events would have to be maintained if we are to support the historical importance of Jesus Christ in whom the saving revelation of God was made known and avoid the conclusion that the witness of the church does not actually need a historical figure at all but utilizes the image of Jesus Christ only as an expression of something meaningful it has experienced in its historical present. If there is not an indispensable historical character to the statement that God brought Israel out of Egypt, if it is proved that such an event never took place but is only a symbol of cultic experience, then the witness and everything that follows from it is without foundation. Any cultic actualization in which the later generations took part in the experience of the fathers is a historical delusion and should be classified as a redemption myth.

C. The Problem of the Locus and Content of Revelation

The crucial question for theology concerns the content and locus of revelation.¹ It would seem to us that in any idea of revelation that involves a historical event, Israel should have been aware of the revelatory character of the event when it occurred. In the Old Testament this is made possible through the unity of word and event. In von Rad's theology, word

¹J. Barr has attacked the concept of revelation through history because it "involves us with certain contradictions and antinomies" (Old and New, p. 66). Furthermore, other ancient peoples attributed mighty acts to their gods and wrote history as well (ibid., p. 72). The correlation of revelation and history is a modern development, and it is doubtful that we can apply it to the description of biblical thinking (ibid., pp. 83f.). Similar ideas are more radically developed by F. G. Downing, Has Christianity a Revelation (Philadelphia, 1964). Barr does not exclude the use of the category of history or revelation but is against using history as a central concept for revelation (op. cit., pp. 66, 83ff.). He is greatly concerned with von Rad on this issue, and von Rad has answered him, and others, in his book, Wisdom in Israel. The substance of von Rad's reply is that the awareness of the intervention of the gods of Israel's neighbors has never been contested, but that these people did not see the need to develop "extensive historical continuities" to legitimize their existence before God is to be taken as an absence of a "specific theological relevance of history." Therefore, von Rad cannot see why this idea of history, which was constantly developing in Israel, is not necessary for understanding how revelation occurred for Israel (p. 290). We can agree with Barr and Downing that the concept of "revelation" is not actually a biblical idea, and that what we refer to as the Old Testament view of history is very different from what we mean by history in modern usage. But as long as we understand revelation to mean the activity of God towards man, with all its variables: communicative, cultic, literary, event-centered, or where communication and situation are purely functional, we see no pressing need to exclude such a concept. Other symbols of language have similar contradictions when applied to a number of situations, yet seem to function quite adequately under normal usage. The idea of history is such a term, which is far from being free of contradictions and ambiguities when all its ramifications are considered. Barr does not always take this fact sufficiently into consideration when he speaks of theologians who, when appealing to the biblical view of history in contrast to the modern view, are not removing the antinomies present in the concept of revelation in history, but are stating them in a different way (op. cit., pp. 68ff.). See also N. Porteous, ASTI, 8 (1970-71), p. 31, where criticism is leveled at Barr for perhaps taking undue advantage of the ambiguities associated with the word "history." The historical consciousness of the ancient Near East does

not diminish the theological importance of Israel's concern with history, especially when her extensive historiography is considered. We can say that such consideration will caution us against employing the idea of revelation through history as a "central" interpretive principle behind and under which all the biblical material is to be evaluated and organized; but the importance of history can only be minimized to the point that the biblical testimony compels one to consider its proper place. Professor Porteous expresses our sentiments when he states: "The conviction that God is active in relation to his world is surely an insight that may not be surrendered" (*Probleme*, p. 419). Perhaps we should say a few words in relation to the above mentioned problem concerning the activity of gods in events and the type of historiography Israel developed. We should keep in mind Barr's arguments for not placing too much emphasis on the God who acts in history as a sign of "cultural distinctiveness" which can be "evaluated theologically" (*Old and New*, p. 72). History writing in its different forms reflects various cultural, economic, political and intellectual concerns. These concerns, along with the will to reflect on the individual destiny of a people, and therefore their origin, are the stuff out of which *Geschichte* emerges. One need not reflect long to understand how the scientific and cultural concerns of the nineteenth century would cause exact history writing to differ from historiography of peoples from different cultures and ages. It would seem to us that we have ample evidence about the existence of historiography, or the lack of it, in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece. In Mesopotamia and Egypt the will to produce real history writing did not exist, while in Greece it developed comparatively late. Soggin points out, *ThLZ*, 88 (1968), p. 725, that the earliest historical statements come from Plato c424?B.C.-348?B.C., and the first real history writing is by the hand of Polybius c201?B.C.-120?B.C. It seems that Herodotus does not pursue his historiography into the deep questions of purpose. We will have to agree, we think, that in Israel--although we have to allow initially for the use of saga, legends, chronicles, and annals--there has from the earliest times been the production of real history writing. This intellectual accomplishment, despite the suggestion that archaeology may one day disprove our evaluation, distinguishes Israel from other ancient peoples. We refer the reader to R. C. Dentan, *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, which contains a symposium on the entire problem. Cf. W. Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," *EOTH*, pp. 314ff., especially the lengthy footnote on pp. 315f. Here Pannenberg argues that the idea that the concepts of history outside of Israel were caught up in a cyclical view of time cannot be disproved by claiming that no mythological cyclical ideas are evident in the historiographic documents of the ancient Near East. "If a fundamental motif of the cyclical understanding of time is participation in archetypal events and relationships," this is support for the cyclical view, because such a fundamental motif has been pointed out in the historiographical schemes of the ancient Orient by Gese and Eliade (p. 316).

This consideration would lead us further on into the debate on the Hebrew-Greek contrast about which we may permit ourselves a few words. Barr again seems justified in protesting against the way the differences between these two cultures have been exaggerated to support the idea of revelation through history as the "central" concept in theological consideration. This has tended to pit event against *logos* with the result that history becomes dominant, even tending towards exclusiveness, while other

is related to event in a very complicated way, and he avoids the equality word seems to share with event in the biblical witness. In von Rad's work, event receives predominant consideration over logos. Event is not revelational by virtue of the interpreting or announcing word from God to his chosen instruments but apparently by the inherent character of the event in which appeared the doxa of his activity. The event was recognized as a "sign" or absolute "miracle." It was the doxa of God's activity that was made visible beyond all doubt in these events. It appears that through this idea of doxa von Rad is able to say that at specific times an event can be "addressed" to Israel so that "she could learn God's historical will."¹ While addressing an event to Israel may apply to the word of a prophet, it also seems to apply to the ability of the event to function as revelation bringing forth its own meaning. When von Rad enlarges upon the nature of God's communication with Israel by word and event ("history becomes word and word becomes history")² we may see the anticipation of this relationship between word and event even at the stage where we have only revelation by event.

Israelite expressions where history is not conspicuous are given only peripheral consideration. The argument, however, seems to be concerned with degrees of distinctiveness, and to swing the pendulum too far in either direction would not hasten a solution to the matter. Barr's earliest major criticism of the Hebrew-Greek contrast is found in Semantics of Biblical Language (London, 1962). Criticisms which followed are contained in Biblical Words for Time (1962, 1969) and Old and New (1966), where his conclusions reached on the basis of previous studies are set out and related to the theological question as a whole.

¹OTT, II, 358.

²OTT, II, 358.

Von Rad's understanding of the Old Testament statements all but ignores the importance of the theophany and the biblical presentation of verbal communication and conversation between man and God in relation to God's acts. Yet this meeting of man and God is indispensable and central to biblical faith, and any theological importance we attach to events or history comes through commitment to the authority of this prophetic word. J. Barr is correct when he argues that the word of God communicated through the prophet deserves as much attention as the events associated with it. The word is just as central to the tradition as the events, in fact it is the precondition of the acts as much as the interpreting word is a consequence of the acts.¹ But von Rad, through his complex presentation of the relationship between word and event and his understanding that the biblical statements do not refer to the kind of revelation that comes from above or to presenting a religious interpretation of the historical facts, has neglected this understanding of word. His exclusive concern with confessional statements drawn up by faith has effectively negated the theological importance of word and the importance of the originality of event in the tradition for the concept of revelation.

The basis of his contention is rooted in his depiction of the chance coalescence of traditions in the cult which by their very sequence testified

¹Barr has attacked extreme and evasive positions that seem to avoid the word characteristic of revelation with such force that his criticisms have appeared exaggerated (Old and New, pp. 72ff.). N. Porteous, Probleme, pp. 419f., admits that Barr has some right on his side, but that his distinction between speaking and acting has been too sharply drawn. Those who promote theology as recital admit that God is reported to have spoken in connection with what he had already done or will do. Moreover, when Barr reminds us that wisdom literature has little to say about the divine acts in history he should himself be reminded that he has depreciated the view of those who seek to find revelation in the entire Bible.

to the guidance of God. This allows the events in the old Credo to stand as bruta facta without any interpretive word. The question here is whether Israel's cult could create its own religious reality, or whether the cult is derivative. It seems that the unrepeatable nature of the events in biblical religion would prevent Israel's cult from creating its own reality. Because the character of Israel's festivals was historical it would depend on and emphasize memory, memory maintained through the cult. We cannot overlook the fact that Israel's religion is a mediated religion, and this implies an inseparable unity of event and word which was then maintained through cultic reenactment. If revelation in the form of events must also take into consideration that the prophetic word is also an event with as much individual importance in the tradition as the event to which it is joined, would we not be more justified in presenting a view of tradition that gives this prophetic element proper consideration? N. D. Freedman defines tradition as follows:

The tradition consists of the combination of revelation and event, when the historical moment has come and gone. It is the memory of the event, framed by the prior announcement, and the subsequent interpretation and evaluation. Or in other words, the theophany to the prophet, the mighty deed, and its meaning; all wrapped together in the collective and authoritative memory of the community, constitute the tradition.¹

If the unity of word and event is not maintained on the basis that Israel's religion is a mediated religion, then it seems difficult to attribute revelational or salvational character to events at all. Even the doxa

¹"History and Eschatology," Int, 14 (1960), p. 149. Freedman cautions us not to identify "prophet" with the historical picture of the prophet or the prophetic movement. In the sense he uses the term, it refers to the human figure who mediated the word, announces the divine action to take place, is often the instrument of that action, and the one who interprets it theologically.

of an event is not necessarily divine. Beyond this is the question of the hand of God, and for this the contact between God and man is essential. An extraordinary event such as the Exodus could scarcely be revelatory without this linkage of God to the event. In von Rad's understanding the significance of the original event bore little resemblance to the way the later cultic community understood it. If this is so, we may question how he can refer to the event as a revelatory act¹ when nothing seems to have been revealed. How may an event be revelatory when it did not appear to be such to those who originally experienced it, but only to a later worshipping community? The content and locus of revelation in von Rad's theology are not actually in an event in history, for if the later worshipping community was the first to understand the revelatory character of this event then revelation is something that happens in the worshipping community and not contemporaneously with the event. The same may be said concerning the Christ-event in the New Testament. For if Christ was not aware of the revelation which he bore, then it follows that the locus and content of revelation lay in the primitive church and in the minds of the writers of the New Testament, but not in Christ.² Can anything be revelational before it is revealed? Here we seem to be involved with philosophy, for this latter question brings to mind such philosophical conundrums as, "'What is experience before anyone has experienced it?'"³

¹OTT, I, 115ff.

²We should note that J. McIntyre is quick to place the responsibility for the rise of questions about the content and locus of revelation on the form critic (op. cit., p. 47).

³J. V. Casserly, Towards a Theology of History (London, 1965), p. 5.

III. Summary

The following points present themselves from this discussion:

1. Because the historico-critical method tends to brand the kerygmatic picture of Israel's history as unhistorical and because it works without a God hypothesis, von Rad chooses to allow the two pictures of the history to remain separate rather than look for a methodological solution to their differences.
2. Despite their differences von Rad's critics will not tolerate two histories.
3. The Pannenberg school has attempted a methodological solution to this radical separation of versions by giving the critical version its due. Pannenberg includes the Heilsgeschichte in the universal history and identifies history with the transmission of traditions in which occurrence is combined with understanding and transformation. This, itself, is counted as an event. This has merits, but also weaknesses:
 - a. It does not give particular traditions historical importance above others.
 - b. The significance of the past is neglected. Rendtorff equates history with tradition, but again interest is centered in the tradition and tracing its historical course. No attempt is made to determine the historical rank of the tradition. The status of events still appear to be that of traditio-historical events.
4. Formative factors behind von Rad's presuppositions and attitude towards history are as follows:
 - a. K. Barth's fear of bringing revelatory events into history where they would become relative and passing.
 - b. An attempt to regain history for kerygma theology which had been lost by Bultmann.

- c. The ideas of E. Troeltsch: the principles of analogy, correlation, and criticism.
 - d. His allegiance to the historically skeptical Alt and Noth school of historical criticism.
 - e. The philosophy of W. Dilthey and his concept of poetry being the highest form of understanding.
 - f. The type of thought evident in the works of R. Otto where there is a corresponding elevation of the secondary to the decline of the original and a promotion of the charismatic over the religious-historical in theology.
5. Consequences of maintaining two versions of the history:
- a. The kerygmatic version appears to be built in the air, and this has left him open to the charge of gnosticism.
 - b. Von Rad's idea of history does not appear to be a solution to positivism, but a capitulation to it.
 - c. It constitutes a threat to biblical religion because if an event or history can be completely dissolved, biblical religion cannot survive.
 - d. We lose the sense of importance for actual history, resulting in the possibility that myth or fable could function equally well.
 - e. Secondary experiences and interpretation are given predominance over fact and event.
 - f. Von Rad's work threatens to separate fact from meaning and this raises the problems associated with neo-Kantianism and the existentialist interpretation.
 - g. The significance of Jesus Christ as a historical revelation following a sequence of saving events in the Old Testament is put in

question when the saving events in the Old Testament are not open to historico-critical investigation.

6. Along with these consequences, we come to the following conclusions:

- a. Troeltsch's principle of analogy need not be binding on historical criticism forever,
- b. We need not adopt a methodology which excludes supranatural and suprahistorical occurrences from the status of history.
- c. One has other choices for a scientific presentation of Israel's history than that offered by Alt and Noth, who are notoriously skeptical.
- d. The events of Israel's history are subject to critical investigation, but where means of cross-checking a historical reports accuracy is not available, Israel's picture of the history is to be preferred over one that threatens to separate fact and meaning.
- e. If Jesus Christ the Word was a historical figure and follows in the train of saving events in the Old Testament, then the facticity of those events would have to be maintained if we are not to negate the importance of a historical Christ in whom the saving revelation of God was made known.

7. The primary question raised by von Rad's work concerns the locus and content of revelation.

- a. It would seem that if an event is to be revelational, the revelatory nature of that event would have to be recognized when it occurred. This is made possible in the Old Testament by the prophetic word.
- b. Von Rad, in giving priority to event over word, makes it appear as if the events in the Heilsgeschichte function as revelation without word.

- c. But the revelatory character of these events is given in the cult, not by the prophetic word in combination with the event in its originality.
- d. Thus it would seem that recognition of the revelatory character of the event takes place in the worshipping community, not in the event when it occurred.

CHAPTER SIX

FAITH AND HISTORY

I. The Historico-critical Method

Much of von Rad's theological problem with history seems to lie in his evaluation of the historico-critical method which finds it possible to operate without admitting to any divine activity in history. We feel that von Rad's understanding of the historico-critical method should not be considered apart from his acceptance of Troeltsch's principles for historical understanding and criticism which found no place for divine intervention in history. While von Rad wishes to affirm the activity of God in history, he feels that this necessitates keeping the kerygmatic version, the history with God, separate from the historico-critical version of the history. Thus he does not offer us a divine dimension of meaning within a history subject to critical investigation.

There seem to be three possible ways of approaching the problem of the relation of the historico-critical method to Israel's confessional history: (a) deny any place for the historico-critical method in relation to Israel's confessional picture of the history, as von Rad has done; (b) expand the historico-critical concept, as Pannenberg has done, so that it includes the totality of reality, thus allowing faith to be assured of its basis; or (c) examine the origin and characteristics of the historico-critical method to determine if its presuppositions are sound so that as a canon for truth it may function properly, and limit it as a canon of truth where it has no authority due to its historical conditioning.

Von Rad's divorce of the two pictures of the history, his preference for the principle of analogy, and Pannenberg's extension of the historico-critical method into an area where its ability to function is highly questionable persuade us to elect the third alternative.

The historico-critical method emerged from the Enlightenment with its denial of the possibility of miracles or supernatural involvement in the affairs of the world. This denial permeates much of the philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and seems to be responsible for determining the character of the historico-critical method.¹ Kant's idea that nothing inexplicable can be part of what can be observed seems to lie behind the presuppositions of German biblical criticism and contributes to the two presuppositions of the historico-critical method often mentioned in connection with Bultmann's understanding of the method: (a) individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect, and (b) this succession of cause and effect is closed and supernatural events cannot enter.² Here we are permitted a view of the so-called historico-critical method as it exists in certain circles, especially those based on the German tradition of biblical criticism,³ and how E. Troeltsch's principle of

¹G. Ebeling, Word and Faith (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 42. Cf. W. Funk, "The Hermeneutical Problem and Historical Criticism," The New Hermeneutic, ed. by J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb (New York, 1964), pp. 164ff. Additional bibliography on the significance of the historico-critical method for theology may be found in Funk's article.

²R. Bultmann, Existence and Faith (New York, 1960), pp. 291ff. See also, H. A. Nielsen, "Bultmann's Philosophical Troubles," Dial, 8 (1970), p. 635ff.

³It is illuminating to observe that K. Barth, CD, II, 2, 446, refrains from calling the resurrection a historical fact for purposes of "good taste," but will not say that it did not happen. Bultmann belabors this point in Essays Philosophical and Theological (London, 1955), pp. 260f. It appears

analogy and von Rad's appraisal of the historical method in relation to the activity of God in history are products of it.

These two presuppositions need not necessarily be employed together. The second proposition in no way follows from the first one. The statement that every effect has an adequate cause has no bearing at all on whether the cause is transcendent or immanent. One may abandon the presupposition which assumes that effects cannot have a transcendent cause and this will do nothing to the presupposition of historical knowledge that every effect has a cause. D. P. Fuller submits that maintaining the possibility of miracle is actually the best way of preserving the validity of the knowing process. One should credit natural causes where they are found; and where they cannot be found, miracles should not be excluded a priori. This is the only way of maintaining the integrity of the historical method, for excluding the possibility of miracles could allow an effect to exist without

that the modern canons of historical science prevent Barth from calling the resurrection historical. H. A. Nielsen, "History and Happening: Notes on a Barth-Bultmann Dispute," CanJTh, 16 (1970), pp. 71, 73, states that the canons of proper historical science which exclude the resurrection, for example, from the sphere of historical fact are based on the German tradition of historical criticism. But the resulting idea of this tradition that what appears like a historical account cannot be considered to be a historical statement is faulty. The question of whether the resurrection happened does not depend on what historical science determines may be incorporated into its documents. Nielsen states that when the critic says he cannot gain access to the resurrection he leaves the "cannot" unanalyzed, and this makes it possible for him to place the resurrection among events where his doubt has substance. But this doubt has no more weight than the method in determining whether the resurrection happened. These have nothing to do with whether the resurrection happened. What it means is that the historian cannot get back to the resurrection, thus cannot conceive of himself seeing the resurrection appearing as a resurrection. This position produces an undesirable anxiety, a reluctance to believe too much, or to believe only that critical minimum that the critic has specified.

an adequate cause and to admit that this can happen. Maintaining that miracles cannot happen could force one to understand effects as occurring spontaneously without prior causes. This, Fuller feels, would make the historical method unworkable.¹ It seems that the knowledge that a certain kind of event cannot happen is not something given to everyone, and thus it appears that it was because of the contextual conditions of its development that the historico-critical method arbitrarily excluded the transcendent activity of God as a possible cause for historical occurrence. It appears that "the" historico-critical method is actually "a" historico-critical method, never having been a totally objective or neutral method that existed independently of the historical and philosophical preconditioning of the historian. It has been applied according to a certain historically conditioned climate of opinion which has no absolute claim on deciding the question of truth.²

¹"The Fundamental Presupposition of the Historical Method," *ThZ*, 24 (1968), pp. 93ff. Fuller is careful to point out the result of his position on Pannenberg's program, for Pannenberg in emphasizing the "God who acts in freedom," and the "contingency" of history suggests that this acting God is not bound to the laws of cause and effect. Fuller's objection to this is that "if the phenomena within the world itself can emerge of themselves, as it were, because the freely acting God informs all history, then one could never be sure that any phenomenon actually occurring in history would produce its commensurate effect upon its surroundings. These surroundings might at that given moment act contingently instead of in accord with cause and effect, and if this is indeed the way the world operates one can never test a claimed cause by reference to relevant effects" (p. 100). Further, Fuller's concern is that a historian and scientist can also be a Christian, thus he holds that acquiring historical and scientific information depends only on the first assertion, that every effect must have a sufficient cause.

²G. D. Kaufman, *Relativism, Knowledge and Faith* (Chicago, 1968), p. 12, points out: "any position which makes a claim to truth, and which is involved in criticizing other positions, can do so only on the basis of the assumption that the standpoint from which the argument is stated has some special claim to validity which other standpoints being criticized cannot make."

This means that the historico-critical method as commonly understood cannot be the sole canon for determining what is historical, or be the sole arbitrator for the will to truth, and that the historico-critical method has been asserted too dogmatically to support philosophical presuppositions whose historical conditioning was not realized. The sovereignty attributed to this method has caused a crisis over what may be believed, and the common solution offered has been that we may believe only what the critic specifies is worthy of commitment.¹ It is interesting to note that the idea of believing has been placed in a "moral" context based on the will to truth determined by the historico-critical method as understood by E. Troeltsch.² With this view goes a moral obligation to submit to the dictates of the

¹H. A. Nielsen, CanJTh, 16 (1970), p. 72, commenting on the critic's fear of believing too much, states: "If we let ourselves suppose that 'to believe' as applied to New Testament teachings always means the same thing--that meaning being first to probate or approve a given report in some manner and then to incorporate it into one's own stock of beliefs--then we will be hewing pretty closely to the sense of 'to believe' adopted by biblical criticism from historical science. The more serious matter, however, is that by so doing we will have wandered very far from the meanings of 'believe' that go with words like 'believer'. The cost of assimilating those differences of meaning is beyond all estimating."

²Van A. Harvey, The Historian and the Believer (New York, 1966), p. 103. Speaking of a student confused over what to believe, Harvey writes: "... the revolution in consciousness, which came about with the emergence of historical thinking, is fundamentally a revolution in the morality of knowledge. A new ideal of judgment has gripped the intellect of Western man, and the student sensed that this ideal is incompatible with the ethic of belief that has so long been implicit in Christendom. The old morality celebrated faith and belief as virtue and regarded doubt as sin. The new morality celebrates methodological skepticism and is distrustful of passion in matters of inquiry. If Pascal's belief that the heart has its reasons which the reason cannot know can be said to represent the old ethic, then Nietzsche's conviction that integrity in matters of mind requires that one be severe against one's heart may be regarded as symbolic of the new one. The old morality was fond of the slogan 'faith seeking understanding'; the new morality believes that every yes and no must be a matter of conscience" (*ibid.*). [Here Harvey means conscience enlightened by the historico-critical method, in particular as it was employed by E. Troeltsch.]

principle of analogy and the historico-critical method. In this view, as in others, we see an attempt to bring the conditions for one's belief within the realm of a historically conditioned principle of evaluation. This results in suspicion, if not rejection, of the validity of belief based on what cannot be validated by the historico-critical method. In other words, one has a moral obligation to disbelieve that Christ rose from the dead.

II. Geschichte and Heilsgeschichte

It appears to us that after recognizing that the historico-critical method cannot exclude the possibility of transcendent causality from history no other reason, including the idea that the critical method works without a God hypothesis, is adequate for keeping the Heilsgeschichte separate from the historico-critical version. It would seem that in the quest for historical knowledge we cannot stop short of the integration of all parts of historical experience into the whole of historical experience so that the parts have meaningful places in the whole.¹ Considering the relationship

¹J. McIntyre, op. cit., pp. 112ff., points out that there are three structures of history discernible in history: (a) the structure with which the ordinary historian deals, limiting himself to secondary causes without considering the question of Prime Cause; (b) the more comprehensive patterns sought by the philosopher; and (c) the structure that takes the form of a pattern of divine acts not in the scope of the ordinary historian or philosopher. These structures may remain independent of each other but may be integrated by recognizing that there are different dimensions of meaning in history--the higher dimensions including the lower dimensions, so that relations that exist on the lower levels are also included in the higher dimension, although relations exist in the higher dimension that do not exist at the lower dimensions. Isolating the higher from the lower produces a false abstraction that cannot possibly comprehend the totality of history. But this also means that an act of God is not adequately described unless taken along with the details mentioned by the ordinary historian. Ordinary details receive their significance from the higher dimensions that have absorbed them. While looking at the relations that apply on the higher dimensions from the perspective of the lower makes the relations appear paradoxical, they need not appear so if viewed from the higher dimension

of the Heilsgeschichte to the picture of the history presented by the ordinary historian is a metaphysical task that cannot be avoided. While the Heilsgeschichte has its place in the whole of historical experience and cannot be negated by the presuppositions of criticism, the critical picture also has its place in relation to the Heilsgeschichte. Because von Rad has not taken the relationship between the Heilsgeschichte and the critical question seriously, we feel it expedient to present an understanding of history that does.

We find C. H. Dodd's understanding of the relationship between history and Heilsgeschichte commendable. For Dodd, history means two things:¹

down. Thus while the historian may find it difficult to admit that the destruction of Israel could be evaluated as an attack from another nation and as a judgment of God at the same time, or that the crossing of the Red Sea could be due to climactic conditions and yet be confessed as an act of God, the same need not be the case when the view is taken from the higher dimension down to the lower dimensions.

¹There is no universally accepted definition of history. The principal problem confronted in formulating a definition seems to be the fact that history involves a mental process as well as research into what happened. Therefore, history is not something that exists independent of the mind which is active in it. Some scholars claim that it is doubtful that there ever is any history of the kind that seeks to reconstruct the past simply for the sake of reconstructing the past. The present interests and values of the historian prevent this (G. Kaufman, op. cit., p. 13). One definition of history seeks to describe history as the totality of all occurrences; another objects, stating that it is only the totality of all remembered occurrences. A related definition stresses that history is meaningful occurrences. Some wish to include the whole stream of events remembered and unremembered with which we are swept along (see N. Porteous, ASTI, 8 [1970], p. 27). J. McIntyre sees history as meaningful occurrence, the meaning of which is derived from a construct out of the categories of: "Necessity, Providence, Incarnation, Freedom, and Memory" (op. cit., p. 13). The presence of these categories distinguishes history from other occurrences which are not constituted by these categories. All of these categories must be present before historical occurrence takes place. J. Barr objects to history as a construct, "which is supposed to be related to the biblical material but which is ambiguous in the degree in which it affirms the actual form of biblical material" (Old and New, p. 18).

(a) a series of events, or (b) a record of a series of events.¹ The reason for this distinction is that for Dodd history is constituted by events that hold sufficient meaning and interest for a group of individuals who, for the sake of that interest and meaning, remember them and pass them on, finally recording them for a larger public. If sufficient interest is not taken in an occurrence to merit remembering it, it does not constitute history.

Writing history consists of recording occurrences and bringing out the meaning of those occurrences. A historical "event" is actually "an occurrence plus the interest and meaning which the occurrence possessed for the persons involved in it, and by which the record is determined."² History is constituted by events which are relative to the mind which is involved in those events. To ask the question whether the mind which is active in the occurrence or the occurrence itself is the prior determining factor is to ask a question which cannot be answered, according to Dodd, for history is made up of events which are an inseparable unity of both.³ Yet, Dodd stresses the importance of historical actuality, historical facts.⁴

Because events are relative to the mind that is active in them, and the meaning apprehended is an inseparable part of the event, it would follow that a series of events is best understood when, to some degree, it is

¹History and the Gospel, pp. 19f. The following discussion of Dodd's view of history and Heilsgeschichte is based on this work and two other books of his: The Apostolic Preaching (New York, 1944) and The Bible To-Day (Cambridge, 1952).

²History and the Gospel, p. 20.

³Ibid., pp. 20f.

⁴Ibid., p. 27. See also The Bible To-Day, pp. 26f., 144ff.

apprehended from within and not from a totally detached point of view. This does not mean that one is subjectivizing history, for the events of history exist only in union with the meaning they held for those who experienced them. When it is said, therefore, that history is the place where the self-revealing activity of God takes place, we are speaking not of bare facts or occurrences, but of the "rich concreteness of events."¹ Naturally, because of the part the human mind plays in the event, the intensity and significance of events may vary. Some crucial events have more significance than others. It is understandable then that a historical religion does not attach itself to the whole temporal series or any causal event, but to a particular series in which resides a unique significance attributable to one uniquely significant event. It is not incongruous with the nature of history itself to make such a selection or to attribute unique significance to one event. If one event exceeds another in significance, then one event may be uniquely significant, and this event may give a unique character to the entire series to which it belongs.² In the Old Testament the entire series of events: the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the events at Sinai, the conquest of the land of Canaan; the founding of the Davidic dynasty, the Exile and the Return, is declared by the prophets to manifest the activity of God.³

¹Ibid., p. 21.

²Ibid., p. 22.

³In his book, The Bible To-Day, p. 53, Dodd reveals that he takes the clue offered by the prophetic period to interpret the entire Old Testament. The prophetic understanding of contemporary history was employed by the biblical historians, who gave the final shape to the Old Testament historical books, to interpret the creative periods that preceded it. The prophets were aware that there had been revelations in history before. Dodd maintains that even though the account of the Exodus is overlaid with legend, yet

Human and natural forces may enter into the picture, but the meaning of this series is the fulfillment of God's purpose for his people.¹ The ultimate revelation of his purpose, however, would not take place until the end of history, at the Day of the Lord, the eschaton. The prophets attempted to give the Day of the Lord, which originally referred to an unrelated catastrophe following upon the course of history, an ethical and rational significance by bringing it into relationship with the course of events in the past and with whatever tendencies they determined from the events of the present. In this way it was no longer a detached event but the consummation of the entire series. Apocalyptists, while not recognizing divine meaning in the present, still preserved the idea of divine control and the meaning implicit in the Day of the Lord. This prophetic view is preserved even with the contrast between the present age and the age to come which brings out the supra-historical aspect of the Day of the Lord.²

Even though the eschaton in the Old Testament is spoken of in terms of the destruction of Israel by Assyria or the return from the Babylonian

legend is an important source of historical information. When he speaks of the call of Moses, Dodd affirms that we can recognize the same kind of personal experience that is evident in Isaiah, that which has immediate reference to the needs and destiny of a people. In the more remote stories of Abraham which have the quality of folk tales there is history present. In these stories, as in the prophets, we have the word of God coming to man as the "meaning of the facts of his experience," and when he responds he "gives a new direction to events" (p. 57). Here, then, at the beginning of the Bible story we have the prophetic pattern at its simplest. On the basis of this understanding it would seem that von Rad is wrong to separate the events in the Heilsgeschichte from the response of faith. This amounts to an arbitrary attestation of God in the individual facts of history, whatever they were.

¹History and the Gospel, p. 24.

²The Apostolic Preaching, pp. 80f.

exile, it is not to be thought of as one event followed by another in an ordinary sequence, because the eschaton was final and nothing could follow. If the eschaton did not arrive, the meaning of the whole series of events would be problematic.¹ Some prophets and apocalyptists depict the nearness of the eschaton by associating it with contemporary events which then become fused with the supernatural characteristics of the Day of the Lord, the eschaton. The entire meaning of a long process of history, if it were to continue, is contained in the eschaton. In it the hidden rule of God comes to light. While the Day of the Lord belongs to the realm of the wholly other, it is not unrelated to the recorded course of historical events. History does not achieve its meaning and reality from within history, but for these depends on what is other than history. It is in the eschaton that the real, eternal meaning of history is concentrated, therefore the eschaton has an organic relationship to history. The consummation of history in this event makes the whole divinely governed and affirms the values implicit in history. Thus the eschaton is also a new beginning. In one sense it is the end of history, but it is also the beginning of the age to come. This age, while not history, is the realization of the values which life in time seems in part to both affirm and deny.²

But the Old Testament closes with a sense of inconclusiveness. The promises have not been fulfilled. To this extent the Old Testament manifests the characteristic of expectation. The divine meaning in history rests in

¹Ibid. See also History and the Gospel, pp. 25f.

²The Apostolic Preaching, pp. 81ff.

doubt. In the New Testament the general eschatological scheme of the Old Testament is taken over, and there is the understanding that with Jesus Christ the eschaton has entered history. The age to come has arrived. It is the time of fulfillment. In Christ the hidden rule of God has been manifested. This is the event to which both prophets and apocalyptists referred. The meaning of history is now contained in this event by virtue that it is the fulfillment of all that God promised in the Old Testament.¹

While in one sense the arrival of the eschaton is a final event and nothing else may follow, in another sense the realization of the mythological concept of the Day of the Lord in history produces changes in the concept, for our own time experience has no boundaries to place on time either before or after. So the idea of finality remains, but it cannot be claimed that nothing further may happen in history. Any event which occurs within history forming a part of the time sequence must be followed by other events, thus while Christ the eschaton has arrived, time still goes on, and a further historical period must follow.²

Dodd, after developing his understanding of the biblical Heilsgeschichte, goes on to show how it relates to all history. In delineating his understanding of history, Dodd points out that the history of Israel is not to be evaluated in terms of modern categories of development, rather the Old Testament depicts history as a series of crises in which the word of God came to God's chosen instruments and challenged men to a response. This word

¹History and the Gospel, p. 26. See also The Apostolic Preaching, p. 85.

²The Apostolic Preaching, pp. 87ff. See also History and the Gospel, p. 26.

becomes an actual factor in history, shaping it according to God's purpose. The secular historical process, which may be represented by a horizontal line, is cut vertically by the word of God.¹ In the coming of Christ, the Word of God enters history, not with reference to a crisis still to come, but "proclaiming the immediate impact of the Kingdom of God upon this world in judgement and mercy."²

It follows that with the emergence of the Christian church there has arisen an instrument of divine intervention in history. This divine intervention comes about by its proclamation of the Gospel. This divine intervention is the same as that accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, the kerygma "is no more than the rehearsal of the history in which the Kingdom of God came."³ The re-presentation of the history of Jesus has the purpose of bringing the hearer before the historical event and confronting him with the power of God active in the event.⁴

The relation of the church to history then is an important one. By its preaching it mediates the Word to every age. Also in the central sacrament the Church places itself time and again in the eschatological crisis

¹Dodd asserts that although we are to consider the importance of natural factors in history, the Bible makes it clear that at crucial points a supernatural force impinges upon the natural factors giving them direction. This supernatural force cannot be ignored without rewriting the Bible and falsifying its witness. Here, he feels, lies the real question of belief in the supernatural. Miracle stories "lie on the fringe" of the central feature of the biblical record which is an encounter of man with God (The Bible To-Day, p. 100).

²History and the Gospel, p. 99.

³Ibid., p. 111.

⁴Ibid., p. 112.

out of which it arose, and in so doing it lives within the historical moment of redemption. Dodd is not suggesting, however, that the church, in achieving this contemporaneity with the Christ-event, is experiencing something in a timeless "now". This experience is not a timeless truth symbolically described in the garb of time, space, and matter, but a piece of actual history. Thus, our relationship to history in the Sacrament is that, on the one hand, we stand within the time process wherein events are determined by what comes before them, including epoch-making events, and especially the Christ-event; but, on the other, we stand within the Christ-event and are shaped by it. Our contemporary experience is made a part of the redemptive experience set forth in the Gospels by virtue of the sacramental experience.¹

The church, therefore, does not deny the reality of time, but it is not confined to history as a mere succession in time with a uniform movement from past to future that is irreversible. For Dodd, the Christian, teleological view of history sees the end of history as something other than the temporal end. The end of history is given in an event that entered history once for all, while the historical process continued.² The Christ-event attributes meaning to all that went before it, and by it the divine character of the process is affirmed. In fact, meaning is given to the whole subsequent process because this event is experienced continuously by succeeding ages.

¹Ibid., p. 113.

²Ibid.

On the basis of these opinions Dodd presents the following view of history. The material of history is the entire succession of events in time in which "the spontaneity of the human spirit interacts with outward occurrences."¹ In the Bible we have part of this succession recorded. It is a sequence of events presented as a history of God's activity with men interpreted by the eschatological event of the coming, death, and resurrection of Christ. This series of events is the Heilsgeschichte, history as a process of redemption. While it shares some of the same events as secular history, it forms a separate distinguishable series.²

The empirical series, secular history, covers all recorded time and will continue into the future. It is linked by sufficient physical and psychological causes and by the sequence of events in the time process. Whatever attempts are made to detect a meaningful pattern that will have universal application in this historical series meet with little success. The reason for this lies in the understanding of this history as purely "process," and in an empirical series there is no way of discovering its beginning or its end. This leaves history as merely process without ultimate meaning or value. Any position one assumes from which to make an evaluation of this process, such as that position which created the doctrine of progress, is only a part of the process and thus historically conditioned.³

But historical events may also take their place in another series, the Heilsgeschichte--history as a redemptive process. The biblical history forms the nucleus of this series, and the Bible professes that the meaning of all history is found in the meaning of this inner core, since God is

¹Ibid., p. 114.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 115.

Creator and Ruler of all things and redeemed the world to himself. This means that in the final analysis all history is Heilsgeschichte.¹

Dodd points out that in Christian theology this universal scope of the divine meaning in history is expressed by placing the history of the Old and New Testaments in what he refers to as a mythological scheme beginning with Creation and moving forward to the Last Judgment. These are symbolic statements of the truth that all history is teleological, working out God's universal purpose. The Last Judgment, while a mythological concept which reveals the triumph of the divine purpose in it, is nevertheless something already attained in the historical event of the death and resurrection of Christ. Christianity separated this historical element of "realized eschatology" from the general expectation of Jewish eschatology. What was left of the eschatological concept became a symbolic expression of the relation of all history to God's purpose. The Last Judgment is characterized by its universality, including all men of all times. All history is included in the fulfillment of that divine purpose of which the death of Christ is an "intra-historical expression."²

According to Dodd this mythological setting is essential to the Christian interpretation of history as a "process of redemption." History as a process of redemption and revelation has both a beginning and an end in God and not in time. The beginning is God's purpose, and the end is God's purpose fulfilled. The Heilsgeschichte, which concludes with the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 117.

death and resurrection of Christ, is positioned between the beginning and the end of history as a process of redemption.¹

It is the Heilsgeschichte that is brought to life when the church experiences Christ's coming in the Sacraments, or when the hearer responds to the preaching of the saving act of Jesus Christ.² The present situation in which we stand is thus made a part of the Heilsgeschichte. No longer is our situation merely a part of a secular history, though it also remains a part of that succession; it is caught up into that other series, the Heilsgeschichte, that gives it real meaning.³

When the transposition from one historical series to the other is made, our own history--whether as individuals or communities--is altered. The Old Testament story becomes our own story. There man is called of God, given his law and promises, and is the object of his redemptive purposes. Yet he rebels and does not subject himself to God's purposes, nor does he

¹Ibid., p. 117f. We wonder if Dodd's idea that the Last Judgment merely cuts across the time-stream at any historical moment is not too restrictive. While realized eschatology implies finality, the historical factuality of the First Advent implies that the Second Advent, which wraps up the present world order, is also a literal coming, though both are a part of the single fact of Christ. It is not that at his Second Coming time and history come to an end in the sense of a terminus, but in the sense of a consummation time gives place to eternity. Cf. J. McIntyre, op. cit., pp. 82ff.

²History and the Gospel, p. 118. This situation corresponds largely to the reactualization of the saving acts in Israel's cult. The situation in which a response is made to the revelation of God in his saving work is sometimes referred to as a kairos. When one hears the account of the kairos passed down through the memory of the church and responds in faith, he arrives at his own kairos. This is constitutive of history (McIntyre, op. cit., pp. 101, 105f.). Cf. O. Cullmann, Salvation in History (London, 1967), pp. 208, 276, 336f. To be aware of the manner in which the word kairos is sometimes questionably used in theological discussions see J. Barr, Biblical Words for Time, pp. 21ff.

³History and the Gospel, p. 118.

receive the fulfillment of the promises. In this portrayal, our own story is unfolded. The New Testament expresses the crisis in which we find ourselves subject to judgment and salvation. All history falls into this pattern, and our own history confesses the divine meaning of that pattern when it is caught up into it. The present situation, with both its evil and good, is brought into divine judgment when it confronts the truth of the cross. The task of the Church is to confront all historical movements with the divine truth revealed in the death and resurrection of Christ that they may be judged by the divine meaning of that crucial event.¹

Divine judgment is not merely an opinion or a "bare sentence," but a historical action working itself out in any historical period. The Church itself is brought into judgment by the proclamation of the Gospel, for the world is within the Church. But the other side of judgment is forgiveness, and the moment one places himself under God's judgment he experiences the mercy of God. The Christian way of dealing with any situation in history is to place it under God's judgment that it may also experience divine forgiveness. This is a divine action in history and not an inward or subjective condition. Any situation brought within the context of the Heilsgeschichte with the Gospel facts as its creative center is brought into contact with the judgment of God and also exposed to the possibilities of transformation and renewal.

There is no situation that is not capable of being elevated into the order of the Heilsgeschichte. The factors belonging to the empirical order, nature, and the minds and wills of men are always at work, but ultimately

¹Ibid., p. 119.

the constitutive factor of history is not these, but the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is constitutive of history because it is beyond history and enters into history, for nothing purely from within history could give true and absolute meaning to the process of which it is merely a part.¹

¹Ibid., pp. 119ff.

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